

STEM CELL RESEARCH MAKING STEADY STRIDES IN INDIA

The field is expected to grow exponentially in the next 10 years, paving way for opportunities

RANJANI MADHAVAN | BANGALORE

Stem cell research, a part of regenerative therapy, deals with regenerating cells, tissues and organs to restore their normal function. Being a niche field, it is yet to

reach its full potential in India. However, there is much scope, as the field is expected to grow exponentially in the next 10 years, opening up opportunities for young researchers.

"There are currently very few companies developing stem cell products/drugs in India, as compared to those in Europe, Japan and US. It takes years to bring a product from the bench to the bedside. Working with the regulators and undergoing clinical trials, takes time. We are yet to see an approved stem cell product in the country," says Vijayaraghavan, General Manager-HR of Stempeutics Research, a Manipal Education and Medical Group Enterprise.

According to him, the ad-

vantage of it being a niche sector is that it finds many global experts working in the field. The Stempeutics group, has around 50-60 members, including dedicated experts from Germany and US. "This field requires a level of expertise and commitment, as it takes years to bring a product to the market. The flip side however, is that there is little awareness among public," he says.

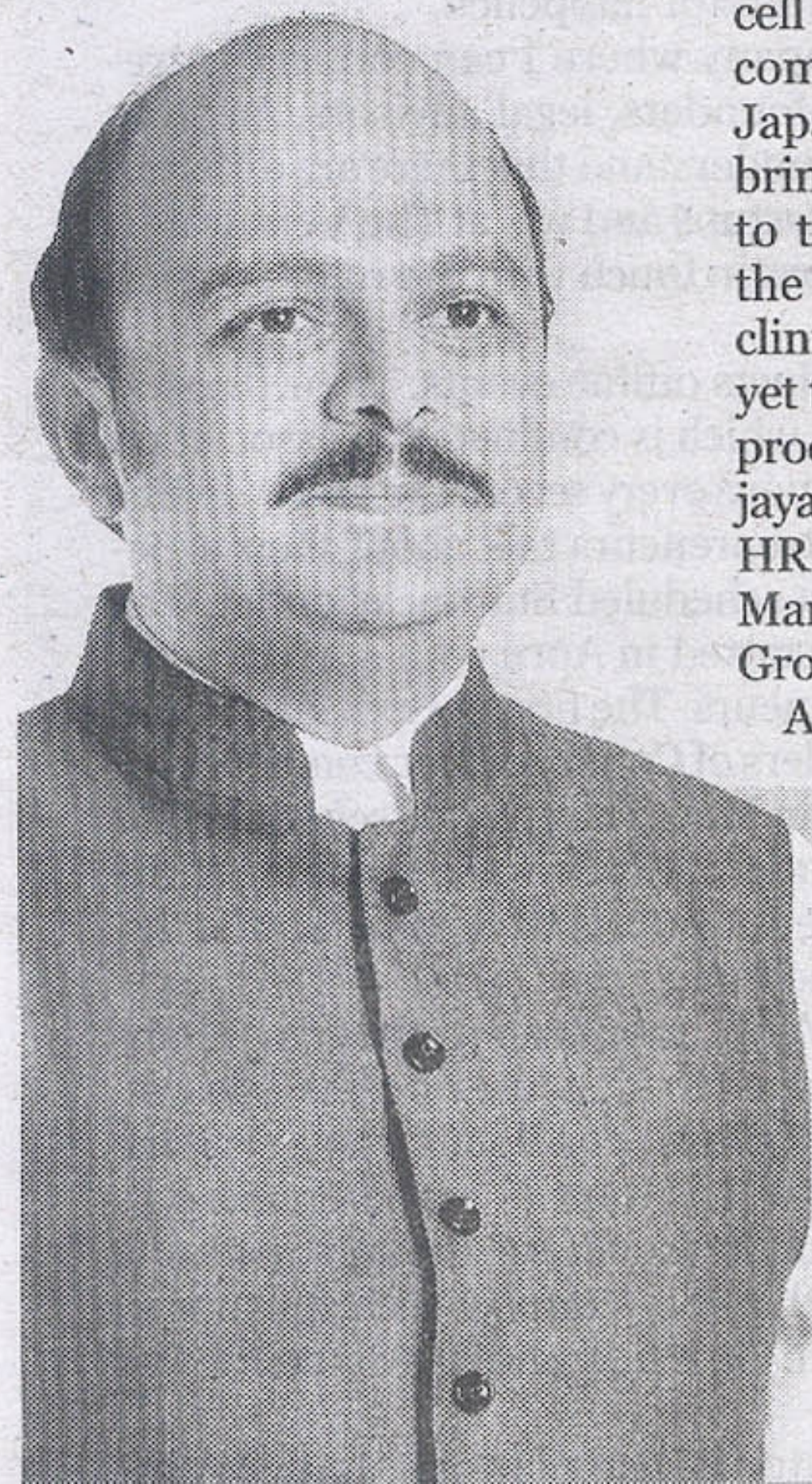
The present government seems to be taking steps in the right direction to change this. It is in the process of implementing a policy to do with conducting clinical trials and following appropriate approval processes for stem cell research. "Big pharmaceutical companies are soon expected to invest in India. The stem cell industry will be as popular as IT, he says.

There are quite a few schools in India offering UG courses in Stem cell research, one of them being the School of Regenerative Medicine, Manipal University. Other options include Nichi-In Centre for Regenerative Medicine and Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine.

Vijayaraghavan says, "Career opportunities are available in research and development, either with basic science or applied sciences, with developing future products, in quality and in manufacturing. Postgraduation is a bare minimum in this field. Students in India are not aware of the opportunities available, due to less market demand. However, there will be major market for stem cell products in the next 10 years."

"Countries such as Japan have released autologous products, where the donor and recipient are the same. The cells taken from the patient is given back to him/her. Another kind is the allogeneic product. These products have different donors and recipients. Cells taken from one individual can be given to another," says Vijayaraghavan, of the scope of stem cell research.

— ranjanimadhavan5@gmail.com



COUNTRIES SUCH AS JAPAN
HAVE RELEASED
AUTOLOGOUS PRODUCTS,
WHERE THE DONOR AND
RECIPIENT ARE THE SAME
— VIJAYARAGHAVAN,
STEMPEUTICS RESEARCH