

Advance made in growing heart cells

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Researchers in Toronto have made advances in developing human progenitor heart cells from embryonic stem cells.

Dr. Gordon Keller, director of the McEwen Center for Regenerative Medicine at the University Health Network reported in the journal *Nature* the new method of generating the heart cells can be used to make an unlimited supply for researchers to study cell processes and medical applications.

The manufactured heart cells likely will be used to study how the heart develops and to test whether heart medications are toxic, the Toronto Star reported.

"These cells are remarkable ... in that they can make cardiomyocytes, the cells that actually contract, and they can also make cells that contribute to the blood vessels in the heart," Keller said.

His team used two different human embryonic stem cell lines from Singapore and Wisconsin, both approved by Canadian and U.S. oversight agencies, the report said.

The study expanded on work done last year by researchers led by Charles Murry, director of the Center of Cardiovascular Biology at the University of Washington in Seattle, who showed it was possible to turn human embryonic stem cells into heart muscle cells.

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