

Caution: Here's advice on legit stem cell clinics

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(AP) -- Scientists are making progress in testing stem cells to treat a variety of diseases, but they're warning about clinics that push unproven treatments.

There are clinics "selling [snake oil](#)" all over the world, warns Sean Morrison, a stem cell expert at the University of Michigan.

The International Society for [Stem Cell Research](#) says it's concerned about aggressive marketing of treatments by clinics that may not have safeguards to ensure safety or likely benefit.

In June, the society launched a website - <http://www.closerlookatstemcells.org> - for people interested in such clinics. It has already attracted more than 10,000 hits.

The website offers background information on stem cell research and suggests questions to ask at a particular clinic, such as:

- What is the scientific evidence that this new procedure could work for my disease or condition? Where is this published?
- Is there any independent oversight or accreditation of the clinic where the treatment will be done and the facility where the cells are processed?
- What are the risks of the procedure and the possible side effects, both immediate and long-term?

The website also invites readers to submit the names of clinics, which the society will then contact for specific information as it builds a public list of facilities. The list will reveal whether these clinics provided evidence of appropriate oversight and patient protections.

At a U.S. government website - <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov> - patients and families can search for formal treatment studies all over the world that are aimed at particular diseases.

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