

Scientists use muscle to heal scars from heart attacks

DALLAS (AP) — Scientists working on the frontiers of gene therapy have come up with a possible strategy for repairing the damage of heart attacks by transforming useless scar tissue into healthy muscle.

The approach — outlined Tuesday at a meeting of the American Heart Association — is still untested, but it is one of a dozen or more ways in development to cure heart trouble by regulating the body's genes.

Some of these strategies are moving rapidly from lab animals to people. Experts predict some of them will be tried on heart patients within a year or two.

"There has been tremendous progress in this approach in just two years. The roadblocks that stand in the way have been identified," said Dr. R. Sanders Williams of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

More than 40 reports on gene

therapy are being presented at this week's heart meeting.

One of the more creative strategies was outlined by Dr. Laurence H. Kedes of the University of Southern California. About six years ago, scientists discovered a gene called Myo D that can turn almost any cell in the body into a muscle cell.

Working with dogs and rats, Kedes transferred this gene into the scar tissue that forms when a heart attack kills heart mus-

cle. He found that the gene indeed transformed some of this tissue into muscle cells.

Whether these cells will actually work like normal heart muscle remains to be seen. The cells made so far are skeletal muscle, not heart muscle, and Kedes is unsure whether it will conduct electricity and beat like the muscle it is meant to replace.

Until these hurdles can be worked out, Kedes said, "this is far removed from potential hu-

man application."

The form of gene therapy that is probably closest to human use is intended to overcome one of the greatest shortcomings of angioplasty — the failure of angioplasty.

More than 300,000 Americans undergo this procedure annually, which involves inflating a tiny balloon to squeeze open clogged heart arteries. The arteries close shut again within a few months in about 40 percent of patients.

White

Continued from Page 1

"Jerry Falwell said one day gays and lesbians will be annihilated in this country and the rejoicing will be great in heaven," he said.

White said gays and lesbians shouldn't be killed for something they can do absolutely nothing about.

"Ten gay men have been murdered in execution style in Texas since the murder of the last abortion doctor," he said.

White said political action in America today is incredibly focused on gay and lesbian rights.

He said when running for office, President Clinton read five separate reports that said gays and lesbians were serving at all levels of the military. Clinton said he would lift the ban of homosexuals in the military.

"Clinton ended the issue by saying 'I'm going to have to sacrifice for a greater good,'" White said an Oregon survey said gay men and women are 78 percent more apt to molest children than heterosexuals.

However, only 23 states now have anti-sodomy laws, a decrease from 48 states.

"In light of all we're up against, who in the world would choose it?" he asked.

White said it is a very personal thing to talk about your sexuality.

"It's an awkward thing especially when you're 13 and falling in love with other Boy Scouts instead of Girl Scouts," he said.

White said he would fast for a week at a time and ask God for forgiveness for being gay.

"I grew up afraid that God didn't love me and would condemn me," he said. "By the time I got to college they told me all it would take was a good woman to cure me. They never tell lesbians that."

White told his wife about his struggle with homosexuality after a year of marriage.

"I told my wife that I wanted to get over it," he said. "I wanted to be a husband and father and grandfather."

In the years that followed, White tried several methods he thought would cure him of his homosexuality, including therapy.

"My wife and I spent about \$100,000 in therapy," he said.

White then tried Catholic and Protestant exorcism. After exorcism failed, White tried electric shock.

"You get attached to electrodes and then they show you pictures of men and women," he said. "I was falling in love with the therapist the whole time."

After years of failure, White said he unraveled a metal hanger and began slashing his wrists, saying 'I want to die.'

"After I got out of intensive care and got home, my wife said 'you need to choose life' and we separated," he said. "Now we're the best of friends."

Thompson

Continued from Page 1

Thompson said he and A&M President Ray Bowen have taken steps to make sure the negative publicity A&M has received in the last year doesn't happen again.

"Dr. Bowen and I have been working closely together dealing with the problems we found on our plate when we arrived," Thompson said. "We will see the good name of A&M be back intact."

A management audit of Texas A&M is expected to be released in late November or early December, Thompson said.

Thompson said he intends to comply with the results of the audit.

"We will take appropriate action as information becomes available and we will share it with the media," Thompson said.

Thompson said later this week he will announce the 37-member committee that will organize Operation Lone Star.

Operation Lone Star will be funded through private donations of the Chancellor's 21st Century Council and A&M graduates. The cost of Operation Lone Star will not be determined until February.

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