At an early age, I was fortunate enough to learn one of life’s most important lessons—experts don’t always know what they’re talking about. While I have not found any area where this isn’t true, I find it particularly prevalent in healthcare.

I’ve always loved sports and enjoyed exercising. I’ve played almost every sport there is. While I was never much of an athlete, I could spend an entire day trying to pitch a curve ball, sink baskets, kick a soccer ball or swing a golf club. For thirty years I’ve regularly practiced Tai Chi.

My first experience with a health issue came in my late 20s during a routine checkup. I told the doctor my elbows felt sore. He told me it was the beginning of arthritis and if it became too painful he could prescribe medication for the pain.

This didn’t appeal to me. I assumed any soreness or pain was a signal from my body that something was wrong. Taking pain medication would be akin to killing the messenger. I would be telling my body I didn’t want to hear about the problem. Giving my condition a name didn’t tell me what was causing the problem. It appeared my doctor either didn’t know why I had the problem or what to do about it.

A year later someone recommended a chiropractor who specialized in applied kinesiology—the use of muscle feedback techniques to diagnose health problems. He used this technique to find the location of various knots in my arm muscles. After several weeks of painful massaging to break up the knots, the muscles were back to working as they should. This apparently took the pressure off the elbows. He told me if the soreness in my elbows returned, I could feel for any soreness in my muscles and massage the knots to get them working again. I asked what would have happened if the knots had not be broken up. He said it would eventually have resulted in severe, painful arthritis which I would have to live with.

I now have severe arthritis. Instead of in my elbows, it’s in my knees. Several years ago I had to stop playing basketball, soccer and even jogging because my knees felt weak and weren’t able to stand the impact. Until this past summer I was able to play golf. However, the knees became progressively worse. I began experiencing occasional sharp pain. Three months ago, my left knee became swollen and I had difficulty walking.

An orthopedic doctor took x-rays confirming his diagnosis—severe arthritis, bone on bone and loose cartilage. He said both knees would get progressively worse and I would soon need a total knee replacement for each knee.

I had read a great deal about stem cell therapy and asked if he thought it might be an alternative to replacing the knees. He said absolutely not. There is no evidence we can regrow bone or cartilage.
I had done enough research on stem cells to know doctors had been reporting encouraging results in restoring bone and cartilage. However, I also found many were attempting stem cell therapy without proper training, without proper stem cells and without the strict processing of stem cells that is necessary for a successful treatment. In other words, there were a lot of charlatans in the stem cell field.

I was determined to find out as much as I could about the therapy. My hope was to raise the odds of successfully restoring my knees without surgery and knee replacements.

I found there were doctors in the US who were reporting significant success with their approach to stem cell therapies. There were also reports of stem cell success outside the US.

One of the stem cell leaders in the US is a company called Regenexx. What impressed me was how this company sent all their data on every patient to an independent organization to compile data on the extent of success for different types of stem cell therapy. Up until 2015 their success rate for knees is about 60%, which was the most successful of all their stem cell therapies.

There are other US stem cell doctors in the US and Mexico, who have websites with video testimonials from very satisfied stem cell patients. Unfortunately, none of these appear to report their success rates. Also, in almost all cases I have encountered, the stem cell therapy involves the use of the patient’s own stem cells. These cells are usually taken from the patient’s hip bone or other areas. They are processed in various ways and then implanted into the knee by an injection. Reported improvement ranges anywhere from little or no improvement to a complete recovery.

Last November I was in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico and met with Barry Russell, a businessman associated with a company called PRMedica, which gets stem cells from a laboratory in Guadalajara, Mexico. Barry introduced me to Dr. Victor Ocegueda, who has been involved with stem cell therapy for many years. Dr. Victor (as we call him) examined my x-rays and my knees. When I asked about his success rate for repairing knees he told me it was around 90%. However, he also told me success depends on how much damage has been done. If the knee is too damaged, it cannot be repaired. He also looked for those in good physical shape. If the person was 82 years old, overweight and a heavy smoker, he was not likely to be a candidate.

Following an initial diagnosis, he told me my left knee not only had bone and cartilage damage, it was close to being bone on bone. In addition, the ligaments were badly frayed. His analysis of both knees appeared far more thorough than any other doctor I had seen. In spite of the damage, Dr. Victor said he believed stem cell therapy would work. He believed I would need an injection of 50 million stem cells in my left knee and 25 million in my right knee. He was confident the right knee would be as good as new. The left knee would improve, but he was uncertain as to the extent of the improvement.

He said the first step would involve a series of blood tests to make sure I did not have any serious diseases or other medical conditions. He said as good as the stem cells were at repairing damage to the body, if there is a serious disease, they can act to accelerate the disease and the person would not be a candidate for treatment.
Assuming I passed the blood tests, Dr. Victor would begin by injecting an implant of stem cells into my belly to prepare my body to make better use of the stem cells designed for healing.

The final therapy would involve taking a lot of my blood (I didn’t ask how much “a lot” would be). My blood would then be mixed with the stem cells. He intended to use an ultrasound to guide him in injecting the stem cell-blood mixture to the precise places in the knees. He expected to be able to get by with one injection into each knee by shifting the needle from the cartilage area to the ligaments. The procedure itself will take only a few seconds for each knee.

I told him I would consider the treatment and returned to the US. As my knees became progressively worse, I was inclined to look further into Dr. Victor’s success. I asked for references and was given the email addresses of three patients, two of whom responded. Both were accomplished businessmen. Each had been treated about a year ago. Extensive talks with each of them confirmed seemingly miraculous recoveries.

The first patient was a Canadian with a severe knee problem. He was in a great deal of pain and a year ago had come to Cabo using a cane to walk. He told me how two weeks after his therapy his x-ray showed an eighth of an inch gap in his knee. It had previously shown bone on bone. The cartilage was regrown, all pain was gone and his knee continued to feel great almost a year later.

The second patient, a US owner of a State Farm business, had severe back problems. He was becoming addicted to pain medication and his doctor said there was no other alternative. His therapy was so successful he has taken a number of others to Dr. Victor for treatment. All of them had similarly miraculous recoveries.

These testimonials, along with a success rate of 90%, led me to arrange treatment with PRMedica and Dr. Victor. This is in spite of them not having a website or other means of publicity. My wife and I flew to Cabo on January 14th. We meet with Barry and Victor at their clinic the following morning to begin my Mexican stem cell adventure.

The Mexican Stem Cell Adventure
Part 2: Treatment
By: Robert Genetski

After committing to go ahead with the procedure, my wife and I arrived in Los Cabo on Sunday, January 14, 2018. We stayed in San Jose del Cabo, about a half mile from Dr. Victor’s clinic.

Monday morning I arrived at his clinic. The first step was to take blood tests to detect whether I had any serious diseases—HIV, cancer markers, hepatitis a and b, and Brucellosis (a bacterial infection). Dr. Victor had already explained to me how stem cells worked wonders in regenerating damaged cells. However, they also had the potential to enhance any disease that might be present.

After the nurse took four vials of my blood for testing, the doctor asked me if I wanted to have a stem cell implant injected into my belly right now. I asked if we shouldn’t wait for the results from the blood tests. He assured that the initial implant of cells would not be enough either to repair my
knees or to promote the growth of any disease. The implant would simply help get my body ready for the actual treatment. Since my knees were getting progressively worse each day, I desperately wanted to start the process as soon as possible.

The implant of stem cells involved an injection on either side of my belly button. The first was mildly uncomfortable, particularly as the fluid entered. The second was even more uncomfortable. I was relieved when it was over. Both areas where he injected were very sore. He said the blood test results would be available within 24 to 48 hours, at which time we could schedule the knee therapy.

Tuesday morning I felt worse than ever. My entire body ached. My knees felt weaker and more painful than ever. It hurt to walk. The areas where he injected the implant were very sore. I felt awful. My wife asked if it might be due to the implant. I didn’t know what it was. Fortunately, I felt better as the day went by.

Wednesday morning, after a good night’s sleep, I woke up feeling refreshed. Then an email from Barry Russell arrived. Barry is the person working with Dr. Victor and a principal in PRMedica, the company that provides the stem cells. Barry’s email said Dr. Victor wanted to talk to me about my blood tests. I planned to see him at 10 am that morning.

At 75 years of age, except for sore knees, I feel as healthy as anyone could imagine. Even so, I was anxious over the test results. Not only would failing the blood tests end my stem cell adventure, it would mean I had more serious problems than bad knees.

To my relief, Dr. Victor said my blood tests were fine. He asked how I felt. I said today was fine, but yesterday I felt terrible. He told me this was good. Everyone reacts differently to the initial implant of stem cells. Some feel great the next day. In my case, my immune system reacted as if the body had been invaded by a foreign agent. By the end of the day, my immune system realized the cells weren’t harmful and stopped reacting. He told me it meant my body would be better prepared to accept the next, more powerful injections of stem cells into my knees.

I made arrangements with Barry to pay for the stem cell procedure. Barry needed the funds wired to his US bank account by noon on Thursday so he could order delivery of the stem cells. The cells must be used within 24 hours of leaving the laboratory.

On Thursday my knees were as bad as ever. I walked about 200 yards before both knees became very painful. I couldn’t wait for the treatment.

I arrived at the clinic at 3 pm on Friday. Dr. Victor took me into a room where a nurse took my blood. The amount was somewhat less than they take when you donate blood. Another nurse began taking ultra-sound images of each knee. Dr. Victor examined the images thoroughly, discussing what he saw with the nurse. After about half an hour, he said the mixture of stem cells and blood was ready.

We went to another room where he explained how he would not need the use of the ultra-sound during the injections as he had previously thought. Instead, the ultra sound images had indicated
he had plenty of room in the knee for directing the injections. The ultra sound also revealed the ligament inside my left knee was greatly inflamed. He decided the best way to deal with the problem was to do two injections into each knee, one into the cartilage and the other directly into the ligaments.

Although the needle was quite long, the two injections into my right knee (the better of the two knees) were relatively painless. These included about 20 million stem cells. The left knee was different. Due to the extent of its damage, he determined it would need 55 million stem cells. He decided to shift more cells to the bad knee than he had first intended.

The first injection into the cartilage of the left knee was a bit painful, but not too severe. The injection directly into the ligament on the inside of the left knee was very painful. He said he had to use the needle first to release the inflamed liquid in the ligament and then replace that liquid with the mixture containing stem cells. The whole procedure took no more than a few minutes. This included time for telling me about patients who freaked out when seeing the size of the needle as well as asking me if I wanted the nurse to hold my hand. I declined.

The side of my left knee swelled up from the liquid released due to the inflammation. The doctor told me the swelling would gradually go down as the liquid was absorbed into the body. He told me to make sure I used the knees by walking so they wouldn’t become stiff. He also gave me his cell and email and told me not to hesitate to call if there was any unusual swelling, redness or other issue.

I asked him how soon to expect any improvement. He told me, as with the initial implant, everyone reacts differently. The average time would be two weeks. After leaving the doctor’s office I walked along the beach for about a quarter mile without any serious pain.

Day one after the treatment I experience significant soreness in both knees. The soreness was different from the pain I had become accustomed to. I assumed this was due to the injections. The soreness became gradually less serious as the day progressed. In the afternoon I walked in the pool and both knees felt good—no discomfort. Later in the day I occasionally felt a sharp pain on the inside of the left knee by the ligaments. This was similar to the pain I had been experiencing before the injections. I also had some occasional pain in the front of both knees. There were also moments where each knee felt unstable.

Day two after the treatment I found the general soreness I experienced the first day was almost entirely gone. Most of the time, both knees felt wonderful. I continued to feel an occasional sharp pain on the inside of my left knee as well as in front of each knee. During the afternoon, I walked about a half mile along the beach, the longest walk I’ve taken in over a month. The knees feel more stable than the previous day. The only discomfort was from occasional sharp pains in the front or side of the left knee.

Day three was the best one yet. The knees felt strong enough for me to return to my Tai Chi exercises. These involve alternatively placing all weight on one leg while slowly kicking out with the other leg. I was able to complete the exercise with much of my stability restored. Later in the day, the knees were slightly sore. The occasional sharp pains are less frequent and much less severe. So far, the results are extremely encouraging.
The Mexican Stem Cell Adventure
Part 3: Setbacks & Recovery
By: Robert Genetski

The first week after my stem cell therapy included both highs and lows. Little did I know at the time, but this forward and back pattern would continue for the first seven weeks.

**Week 1:** The first week began with the excitement of being able to walk for miles and return to my exercise routine. The intense knee pain I previously experienced was almost completely gone. The lows came after realizing I had overdone it. Both knees became very sore. While the soreness was different from the pain I had previously experienced, it was discouraging.

**Week 2:** By the end of my second week after therapy I was only able to walk only about 200 yards along the beach before my left knee became tight and very sore. My first thought was—this thing isn’t working. I was anxious for a two-week checkup.

When I told Dr. Victor what was happening, he said I had done a number of things wrong. He explained how millions of stem cells were hard at work rebuilding bone, cartilage and ligaments.

This rebuilding process would continue for eight to twelve weeks. In the early stages, the new cells were immature. They were soft and fragile. Walking in the pool or on level ground was fine. Walking in sand or on slopes would place a strain on the newly developed cells. He told me to avoid any type of vigorous exercise until the new cells had fully matured.

Victor explained how the tightness in my knee was due to inflammation from overworking the newly built cells. He prescribed an anti-inflammatory medicine and assured me I had not done any permanent damage. He cautioned me to go slow until the newly created were fully developed.

My wife, who was listening to the doctor’s comments, was quick to remind me that she had been giving me similar advice—walk in the pool, not the sand, go easy on exercises. After 52 years of marriage, I never cease to be impressed by how wives are not only always right, but by how often they are able to remind us of how right they have been. After taking the anti-inflammatory medicine, the discomfort subsided.

**Week 3:** The third week after treatment I limited my walking mostly to the pool. For the second time since the therapy, my knees felt wonderful. In fact, they felt so good I continued walking in the pool for about an hour—another big mistake. The tightness (inflammation) in my left knee returned. Dr. Victor told me to take anti-inflammatory medicine and reduce my walking. He wanted me to get the inflammation down and then to keep it down without any medication. Only then should I resume placing any further strain on the knees.

**Week 4:** Week four after the therapy was going well. I limited my walking in the pool to only about 15 minutes, stopped taking anti-inflammatory medicine. The knees both felt great. Just when everything appeared to be going so well, there was another setback.
**Week 5:** For no apparent reason, at the beginning of week five, I suddenly experienced a sharp pain throughout my left knee. While it only lasted for about 15 seconds, I was concerned. The knee pain returned several times during the day and both knees felt different. The left knee again felt tight and both knees felt weaker than before.

At the end of the fifth week I woke up on Saturday with both tightness and a slight pain on the inside of the left knee. I also began to experience some pain during the night while sleeping. It didn’t help any that I had walked about 3 miles on each of the past two days. I called Victor. He proscribed a stronger anti-inflammatory and told me to see him as soon as I could.

**Week 6:** On week six Dr. Victor examined the left knee by twisting and turning it in different directions. Nothing hurt. I asked him if I might need additional stem cells. He said no. not at all. The bad left knee was stable and much improved. The stem cells had worked even better than he had expected.

He placed his finger in the inside of my knee joint and said I now had a large gap where there had previously been only bone rubbing against bone. He also noticed how the knee cap on my left knee was no longer locked in place. It was able to move. This was another good sign. He injected ozone into the inside ligaments on the left knee to accelerate the healing process. I had read about the healing effects of ozone injections and was encouraged he was using it.

At my request, he scheduled an ultra-sound for that afternoon. The ultra-sound confirmed his physical exam. It showed about a ¼” gap in the left knee where there was previously bone on bone. It showed a previously torn meniscus had completely healed. In addition, loose pieces of cartilage were all gone, replaced by new cartilage.

Dr. Victor told me the discomfort I was feeling was pain was due to the ligament still being slightly inflamed. He recommended more anti-inflammatory medicine. Each following day there was less and less discomfort in the knee and less feeling of tightness.

**Week 7:** It's now week seven and most of the time both knees feel fine. Occasionally, they feel a bit weaker than I would like. And I still feel a slight tinge of pain by the inside ligament in the left knee. I'm off the anti-inflammatory medicine.

At this point, my overall assessment is positive. I'm convinced my attempts to do too much too soon set back my recovery. There is no pain at night and the occasional discomfort I feel is insignificant compared to the pain I was in before receiving stem cell therapy.

At this point the knees don’t feel strong enough for me to place any undo strain on them. I'm determined not to make the same mistake I made earlier in my recovery. Regardless of how good my knees may feel, and most of the time they feel pretty good, I'll wait a full twelve weeks before attempting to jog, play golf, or put any additional pressure the knees.

Dr. Victor says I will be able to do all of these things once the cells mature. Five weeks from now I'll report back on the extent to which his prognosis is correct.
The Mexican Stem Cell Adventure
Part 4: The Recovery Continues: Three to Six Months
By: Robert Genetski

It’s been just over six months since I rejected my doctor’s recommendation of knee replacement surgery. After considerable research, I decided to opt for stem cell therapy in Los Cabos, Mexico with Dr. Victor Ocegueda, in collaboration with PRMedica. The estimated cost for both knees is $6,000. I’ve documented the details of my experience in Parts 1 to 3. Those interested in reading about it can access these on my website www.classicalprinciples.com Hover over the economics button at the top, click healthcare and scroll down.

The second three months of my recovery involved both ups and downs. At times I would feel a sharp pain in the front of my left knee or alongside the inner knee. At other times, the knees felt a bit wobbly. The occasional pain and the wobbly feelings would last less than a minute.

At one point I called Dr. Victor to get his opinion. He was concerned. He said it was not what he expected. He said if he could examine me he would be able to find out what was going on and believed he would be able to correct the problem. I told him I wouldn’t be back to Mexico until later in the year. If the problems continued or became worse, I would return sooner.

Fortunately, the pain and discomfort became progressively less frequent. As happened earlier in my recovery, I attribute my problems to attempting to do too much too soon. Three months after the therapy I had decided to resume my Tai Chi exercises. Doing so apparently placed a great strain on my knees. I decided to stop my Tai Chi and see if it helped me to recover. It did. The brief sharp pains became progressively less frequent. The knees became less wobbly.

Five months after therapy the knees felt strong enough for me to resumed playing golf. The only problem I had was my scores weren’t any better than before the therapy. However, after not being able to walk 100 yards without severe pain, the ability to not only walk but play golf were a blessing.

Toward the end of the six months my knees much considerably felt stronger. I decided to once again return to my Tai Chi. There have been no further significant issues with pain.

I do notice that when I do a lot of physical work (helping people move, lifting heavy things, etc.) the knees feel sore for the next day or two. However, the soreness quickly goes away.

At this point I’m very pleased with how well things are going. I don’t feel that the knees are strong enough yet to try jogging or running. I had abandoned years ago due to wear and tear on the knees.

Bottom line, at six months after therapy I’m thrilled with the results. I plan to see Dr. Victor this winter and write another update at my one year anniversary.
For those considering stem cell therapy, I urge you to do extensive research. Become informed about the experience and qualifications of the person doing the therapy. My doctor had eight years of experience. Understand where the stem cells are coming from and how they are processed and handled. Finally, speak to those who have received successful therapy from anyone or organization you are considering. Ask for their success rates as well as the likelihood of a successful outcome given your condition.