Dubious Supplier XCell

Stop Life-Threatening Stem Cell Therapy

Susanne Kutter October 16, 2010

Death forces authorities to place restrictions on the Düsseldorf company XCell.

Cornelis Kleinbloesem is a shrewd entrepreneur. For almost a year now, patients with incurable diseases, and parents with mentally and physically handicapped children have been travelling from all over the world to receive treatment at his XCell Center in Düsseldorf. There, they hope for a cure for themselves or their children from the stem cell therapy that he and his team of doctors offer – at a cost of up to 18,500 Euro. Serious stem cell researchers have just begun carrying out studies to test the effectiveness of such treatments, and now consider the belief that the XCell treatment can succeed to be utopian.

Kleinbloesem’s claims of success could now be his downfall. Some of the 3500 treatments he asserts have been carried out have gone terribly wrong. Stem cells were injected into the brain of an 18-month-old boy, who hours later collapsed and died in the children’s neurosurgery ward of the Helios Clinic in Krefeld. “The medical records have been confiscated,” verified Düsseldorf District Attorney Christoph Kumpa. A doctor at XCell had previously injected stem cells into the brain of a 10-year-old boy from Azerbaijan last Easter, causing cranial bleeding that almost killed him. The family is currently filing suit with the Düsseldorf District Attorney’s Office (WirtschaftsWoche 16 and 32/2010). Three further near-catastrophes are also known to have come to the attention of WirtschaftsWoche.

Kleinbloesem and his dubious stem cell therapies fall into a legal gray area, and will continue to do so until at least the end of this year. Since this death, however, even authorities who previously saw no possibility for intervention have become active.

The Paul Ehrlich Institute in Langen, the organization responsible for stem cell issues nationwide, has drawn up an experts’ report that categorizes the use of stem cells, at least in the brain, as questionable and therefore forbidden. Excerpts have been made available to WirtschaftsWoche: “According to current scientific understanding, the XCell Center’s stipulated use of stem cell treatments has damaging effects that far exceed any tenable limits within medical science.” The state authorities have set a deadline for the company to react to these allegations – the first step on the way to prohibiting the therapy.

The Dominikus Hospital in Düsseldorf-Heerdt (two floors of which have been leased out to XCell for a period of ten years) is also distancing itself from the company: “XCell wanted to work more closely with us in children’s anaesthesia and intensive care, but we refused,” said Hospital Manager Verena Hölken.

XCell did not respond to questions posed by WirtschaftsWoche, but Kleinbloesem did react. He fired the doctor who had operated on the children and announced to authorities that his clinic will no longer perform treatments on the brain. In
fact, a few days ago his employees sent a family from Spain back home again, explaining to them that, “The German government has forbidden this treatment.”