

# Sports Mail



## Cricket is losing charm due to technology says Dickie Bird

# Cellular treatment promises speedy recovery for athletes

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in New Delhi

NOW, athletes suffering knee injuries can be back on their feet in a short span of time. A new procedure, the autologous chondrocyte implantation (ACI) has made its way into the country and is useful for the treatment of cartilage defects in the knee.

Conventional treatment procedures include arthroscopic lavage, known as the "cleaning up" of the knee joint, the marrow stimulation technique including micro-fracture surgery and the osteochondral autografts and allografts.

The ACI treatment, however, offers hope and the advantages of a painless procedure

with sure shot recovery as compared to conventional treatments.

This is a two stage procedure. The first stage involves harvesting a tiny portion of the cartilage from a healthy area of the knee which is then sent to a specialist laboratory where the cartilage cells are cultivated and grown.

This takes about 3-6 weeks. After the number of such cells has grown to approximately 50 million cells, surgery is performed on the knee and the cultured chondrocytes are injected into the site of damage. A leg brace is put to help fill the defect in the cartilage as the

cells grow. Doctors say that this could be a breakthrough procedure for athletic injuries, especially since traditional treatments for cartilage defect in the knee aren't delivering desirable results.

**Injured athletes can now get cartilage injected in damaged parts of body and enjoy a fast and guaranteed recovery**

Recent studies show that 30 per cent of those in the age group of 15-30, mostly sportspersons, end up suffering from a range of cartilage and joints damage, some that may be career-threatening.

"Most athletes suffer from this problem of cartilage defects of the joints, like the hip and knee, following the injury. These defects heal poorly with the conventional treatments,

cannot re-grow and may lead to premature osteoarthritis," said Dr Raju Vaishya, senior consultant orthopedic surgeon, Indraprastha Apollo hospital, which is one of the first hospitals in North India to adopt this facility.

This procedure is touted to be better than conventional treatments, which relieve the symptoms only temporarily as patients often end up in pain a few years later. Also, unlike conventional treatments which work only on small lesions, this technique can help heal larger lesions. ACI may cost anything upwards of ₹1.5 lakhs, but doctors say it is money well spent though, as it offers a long-term cure without side effects, since the cartilage cells are one's own.

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