possible and allow monitoring of cartilage healing without arthroscopy.

Early prophylaxis of cartilage damage and therefore of osteoarthritis might well be achieved by the use of growth factors to stimulate repair of cartilage in situ before breakdown of the collagen mesh. With more advanced damage, the production of large numbers of human chondrocytes by the use of bioreactors and the growth of cells in biodegradable matrices could lead to customised implants for individual patients and cartilage defects.

Developments in treatment of the knee joint will have application in future to other joints with cartilage damage such as the hip, ankle, shoulder, spine, and hands, potentially greatly reducing the prevalence of established osteoarthritis.

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Physicians: an 18th century view The death of Captain Blifil

"And glad should we be could we inform the reader that both these bodies had been attended with equal success; for those who undertook the care of the lady [Mrs Blifil] succeeded so well that after the fit had continued a decent time she again revived, to their great satisfaction; but as to the captain, all experiments of bleeding, chafing, dropping, etc, proved ineffectual. Death, that inexorable judge, had passed sentence on him and refused to grant him a reprieve, though two doctors who arrived and were fee'd at one and the same instant, were his counsel.

"These two doctors, whom to avoid any malicious applications we shall distinguish by the names of Dr Y and Dr Z, having felt his pulse, to wit, Dr Y his right arm and Dr Z his left, both agreed that he was absolutely dead; but as to the distemper, or cause of his death, they differed, Dr Y holding that he died of an apoplexy, and Dr Z of an epilepsy.

"Hence arose a dispute between the learned men in which each delivered the reasons of their several opinions. These were of such equal force that they served both to confirm either doctor in his own sentiments and made not the least impression on his adversary.

"To say the truth, every physician, almost, hath his favourite disease, to which he ascribes all the victories obtained over human nature. The gout, the rheumatism, the stone, the gravel, and the consumption have all their separate patrons in the faculty; and none more than the nervous fever, or the fever on the spirits. And here we may account for those disagreements in opinion concerning the cause of a patient's death which sometimes occur between the most learned of the college, and which have greatly surprised that part of the world who have been ignorant of the fact we have above asserted.

"The reader may, perhaps, be surprised that instead of endeavouring to revive the patient, the learned gentleman should fall immediately into a dispute on the occasion of his death, but in reality, all such experiments had been made before their arrival; for the captain was put into a warm bed, had his veins scarified, his forehead chafed, and all sorts of strong drops applied to his lips and nostrils.

"The physicians, therefore, finding themselves anticipated in everything they ordered, were at a loss how to apply that portion of time which it is usual and decent to remain for their fee, and were therefore necessitated to find some subject or other for discourse; and what could more naturally present itself than that before mentioned?

"Our doctors were about to take leave when Mr Allworthy, having given over the captain and acquiesced in the divine will, began to inquire after his sister, whom he desired them to visit before their departure. This lady was now recovered of her fit and, to use the common phrase, as well as could be expected for one in her condition. The doctors, therefore, all previous ceremonies being complied with, as this was a new patient, attended according to desire and laid hold on each of her hands, as they had before done on those of the corpse.

"The case of the lady was in the other extreme from that of her husband, for as he was past all the assistance of physic, so in reality she required none."

From *The History of Tom Jones, Foundling* by Henry Fielding (1707-54).

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