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## Stem cell eye surgery to be tried

**A new surgical treatment offering hope to patients with corneal blindness is to be trialled in Scotland.**

Doctors in Edinburgh and Glasgow will work together using an innovative technique involving adult stem cells.

About 20 patients will take part in the initial tests, using cells cultivated before being transplanted onto the surface of the cornea.

Millions of people worldwide suffer from corneal blindness, 80% of whom are elderly.

Stem cells are a source of great scientific interest as a result of their ability to renew and multiply indefinitely, potentially regenerating entire organs from only a few cells.

Unlike the more controversial embryonic stem cell research, the technique takes stem cells from dead adult donors.

The trial is being led by Prof Bal Dhillon at the Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion in Edinburgh, working with the Gartnavel General Hospital in Glasgow.

Prof Dhillon said: "This study is the first of its kind anywhere in the world and it is exciting to be involved in such groundbreaking work.

"I probably see two or three new cases of corneal disease every month. On a larger scale, it's a significant problem."

The trial will hope to emulate the success of a similar study in the US in September last year.

In trials at the University of Pennsylvania, subjects with inherited blindness experienced dramatic improvements in vision after a corrective gene was injected into the eye.