

What is your medical history?

Amanda Boxtel
D.O.B. 12/15/1967

On February 27, 1992 I sustained a T11/12 spinal cord injury in Snowmass Village, Colorado.

In medical terminology I fractured T10-L1 with anterior dislocation of T11 on T12 leading to T11-12 paraplegia—Frankel Class A. Right T10, left T12 ASIA Impairment Scale A paraplegia with an asymmetric sensory zone of partial preservation to the left L1 dermatome, secondary to a T12 fracture.

A Denver surgeon performed a posterior spinal fusion with Edwards instrumentation and posterior iliac bone grafting from T10-L1. The date of the surgery was February 28, 1992.

For eight years I was terribly incontinent with an overactive neurogenic bladder. In August 2000 I underwent a life-changing surgery which successfully implanted the **Vocare Bladder System** into my abdomen and S3 nerve root. With the Vocare Bladder Implant I had a posterior rhizotomy of S2-5 in addition to implantation of the stimulator in the lower right abdomen and the electrodes on bilateral S3 anterior roots. S3 was chosen since direct stimulation of it produced the greatest increase in bladder pressure.

How do you feel when a journalist contacts you to share your story?

What I don't want to happen (which I have no control over) is to have a journalist "twist" my story so that I am someone who is perceived as a foolish person who is desperate, rather than a "pioneer" of sorts who is simply curious and is willing to take a risk for the sake of humanity.

What was your initial motivation to pursue treatment with Dr. Shroff? Explain your first contact with Dr. Shroff, advice given, feelings felt—were you scared, anxious, a bit overwhelmed?

Was a leap of faith involved in your decision to get treated by Dr. Shroff? You leaped anyway. What did your doctors say? How did you arrive at this rather significant decision?

I have never considered myself to be a disabled woman fraught with the burden of paralysis. Instead, I have rolled through sixteen years without the use of my legs, bladder or bowels, living a full and active lifestyle downhill skiing, water skiing, hand cycling, and keeping my body fit and supple with diet, attitude, and various alternative therapies such as acupressure, acupuncture, oriental energy work, and massage. While I have never regressed since sustaining my spinal cord injury, I have never

shown any progress. Any new bodily improvements that I have experienced since the first day of treatment in India on June 25, 2007 I attribute to the Human Embryonic Stem Cells. There is no other explanation. A positive attitude, prayer, diet, or alternative therapies never brought life and restored function into my legs. My body's awakening is proof in itself. For this reason, I know I haven't been injected with a placebo or apple juice.

In May 2007 my mother was captivated by a story on TV in Australia of a paraplegic woman named Sonya Smith who was showing noticeable improvement after receiving Dr. Geeta Shroff's Human Embryonic Stem Cell Therapy. Through my research I knew that HESC therapy was possibly the cure-all for untreatable or terminal ailments and is considered by many as the holy grail of medicine. Of course, I was inspired by Christopher Reeve who brought to light the limitless possibilities of stem cells and who pleaded with Congress more than a decade ago to take action for more funding for research to find a cure for diseases and specifically SCI. I contacted Dr. Shroff via telephone. I was astounded that I could simply pick up the phone, dial, and speak to this very "real" voice of an Indian doctor on her cell phone. This is virtually unheard of in our western culture. Dr. Shroff was extremely personable, and willing to answer my myriad of questions. Prior to making my final decision to receive Dr. Shroff's treatment in India, I consulted with close family and friends, and three physicians who are reputable SCI specialists whom I respect implicitly. Without betraying any confidentiality I quote Dr. Daniel Lammertse, medical director for Craig Hospital: "Amanda, this is a non-scientific path—a radical and controversial article of faith. I cannot advise you to do this. My hunch is that you'll be \$30,000 poorer and no different." All three physicians recommended I wait for an authenticated treatment that has passed through the rigor of scientific scrutiny.

Dr. Shroff has filed for a patent with the US Patent Office, the European Patent Office, and the World Intellectual Property Organization to protect her research from theft, which Dr. Shroff claims could have been a potential outcome of publishing an article in international journals or scientific periodicals. Now that her technology is protected, she is willing to publish her findings.

Repeated criticism and ridicule from the scientific world hasn't stopped Dr. Shroff, nor has it fazed her 500 plus patients from all over the world who attribute improvement in their bodies since treatment.

I am no scientist, and I do not proclaim to be a stem cell expert. I am an intelligent woman who is curious to this day. I trusted my gut intuition and faith, and I was willing to put myself on the line. I did my research to the best of my knowledge given my layperson's understanding. I asked Dr. Shroff thousands of questions over the telephone. Despite the skeptics and the negative content I had read online, and notwithstanding the advice from my caring doctors, my gut still yelled "Yes, go to India." I couldn't help but trust and believe. Faith came into play then and now. I continue to

check in with myself, and I continue to get “Yeses”. I leap onward and upward...and my body continues to miraculously improve.

Do you understand Dr. Shroff’s technology? Please explain.

I learned that Dr. Geeta Shroff has developed pure human embryonic stem cell lines that do not show any immune reaction in the body. According to Dr. Shroff, HESCs do not have any antigenic proteins on their surface and thus do not require immunosuppressant drugs. Dr. Shroff’s technology involved the use of just ONE embryo. During her laboratory research and with full consent, she used a surplus embryo from an IVF donor who underwent a barrage of tests including a complex medical history and genetic history.

According to Dr. Shroff, when injected, HESCs can repair the affected area in addition to restoring the physiological functions of the affected area. HESCs have no capacity to fully form a new organ. Once HESCs are injected into a patient, the division of the HESCs is finite, which means over a period of time uncontrolled division is not going to form tumors. In 2007 with over five years of clinical treatment on patients, Dr. Shroff and Dr. Ashish Verma have not found any negative side effects. Five years of documented human clinical trials with zero negative side effects was good enough for me.

In simple terms it can be said that the complete effect of HESCs transplanted into a patient is closely linked with the time frame of the human embryo’s development. This is including nine months of gestation; and then the growth of a new born baby after delivery up until five years of age. After the baby is delivered, the functioning capacity gradually increases as it would in a growing child. Milestones take place in a newborn growing into an infant and critical functions are required for the child to progress such as environmental factors, physical (motor) factors, and educational factors (learned mental development). Although response results in patients are seen immediately after transplantation, the embryonic stem cells continue their developmental process as per their pre-programmed time frame.

Would you say you are a risk taker? How did you minimize fear?

Yes, I am a risk taker and I did have a certain amount of fear. My fear was minimized when I began to see results only weeks after beginning treatment. I try to deflect any negativity from individuals who I meet face-to-face, or from telephone callers, e-mailers or bloggers. In the course of this past year, I have seen fraudulent activity with my stem cell account and I was the victim of identity theft, which I attribute to my controversial stem cell journey. One particular blogger periodically writes asking if I have any tumors yet? I try not to let these naysayers affect my mental outlook. I certainly don’t allow their comments to instill fear in me. It takes commitment to have conviction over my fears, to hold true to my vision despite the skepticism, and to let go of negativity and the past by embracing what could be.

Amanda, will you walk from this treatment?

Will I walk from this treatment? I don't know. Quite frankly, I love the body that is mine right now. It is a constant dance between acceptance and hope—acceptance and gratitude for the body that is mine right now, and hope for the future of what could be. That said, I also recognize that everything I do today (physical therapy, yoga, meditation, my attitude etc.) will help create the person and body that I will be tomorrow.

You're not walking yet? What improvements have you noticed?

I am astonished at my new sensations, at my ability to begin voiding urine on my own, and at the increased muscle power in my abdominal muscles, my hip flexors, gluteals, quadriceps, abductors, and adductors, and now tiny flickers in my calf muscles too. I have life and electrical tingles that run to my toes all day long. My bum gets tired of sitting. I can crawl forwards and backwards, and I can walk standing tall on my knees. My nerve burning pain has almost dissipated completely. My swelling from edema has reduced significantly and my spasticity has decreased. I feel my womanly sexuality and I am able to orgasm for the first time in sixteen years. I accept my body as it is. I am grateful beyond words, and I can only keep the hope and faith alive that I continue to show more improvements.

Do you have expectations? What did you hope for?

I went to India trying to let go of any expectation at all. I told myself that if I showed just 1% improvement, that would be fantastic. If I returned as I was unchanged, then I would put it down to a great adventure. Instead, I've come home after four treatments in eighteen months with astounding results and an adventure of a lifetime.

What were your first signs of change?

Three toes on my left foot began to wiggle on command ever so slightly just two weeks into treatment. Next came increased abdominal strength, hip flexors, quadriceps, gluteal flickers, and then my hamstrings.

How many times have you gone to India for treatment? What should other patients expect?

I have been to Delhi for four treatments in the span of one and a half years.

- First Treatment: Two months—June 25-August 17, 2007
- Second Treatment: One month (which I extended to 5 weeks)—January 11-February 19, 2008
- Third Treatment: One month—May 2-June 2, 2008

- Fourth Treatment: One month—October 22-November 27, 2008
- Fifth Treatment: One month—March 16-April 22, 2009 (extended to 5 weeks due to flight schedule).

Each SCI patient should expect to begin their treatment program with an initial two-month visit to India. This initial first visit is followed by several one-month follow-up treatments. Expect a four to six month interval in between each visit. I am giving myself a two-three year treatment plan as recommended by Dr. Shroff. I expect to complete my treatment in January 2010. At that point I will decide how to proceed.

What is the typical cost for treatment for a spinal cord injured patient?

Payment for each individual varies according to their disability and response to HESC treatment. I paid \$30,000 for the first two-month treatment, with a US\$15,000 fee for each additional month-long treatment. The cost for the first two-month treatment is now US\$40,000. The cost includes private hospital room with private bathroom for patient and caregiver; three meals per day--small refrigerator, toaster and hot water kettle included; HESC treatment program; six days per week physical therapy.

Explain the treatments and spinal procedures? What happens?

In the two months of my first treatment in the summer of 2007 I had a total of five procedures along with six days per week of intense physical therapy and walking with leg braces. Therapy is often twice a day, morning and afternoon. Sundays are rest days free of physical therapy.

Every day during the entire treatment program I received two HESC injections--one in the morning and one at night--seven days per week.

In preparation for a spinal procedure, larger doses of stem cells were administered via intravenous infusion two days per week.

For my second and third treatments, each a month long in duration, Dr. Shroff and Dr. Ashish Verma condensed all five stem cell procedures into one month. The procedures include:

- 1) Caudal Procedure (toward the tailbone area) – injection of two syringe-fulls of HESCs into the cauda equina area near the coccyx.
- 2) Deep Spinal Muscle Procedure – two injections of HESCs into the muscles on either side of my spinal cord at the site of injury.
- 3) Direct Thoracic or Lumbar Puncture – injection of two syringes of HESCs below or above the injury site directly into the spinal cord.

4) Epidural Catheter Three-day Procedure – catheter inserted into the outer sheath of the spinal cord with tubing that is taped to the back and a portal that hangs over the shoulder. HESCs are injected into the portal to saturate the outer spinal area over the course of three days.

5) Two-day Procedure – same as three-day but only for two days. During my month-long treatments, this procedure was an extra procedure done if time permitted, and depended on my recovery time from previous procedures.

No physical therapy is allowed during procedures.

Each procedure affects the body in different ways.

What about the food? What about life in Delhi?

Believe it or not, I have grown to like curry. While some Indian curries have a propensity to regurgitate and burn in my throat for the next 24 hours, I like the taste. Fighting Delhi traffic takes one's patience to the max. It's a fastidious pace of slowness—difficult to wrap one's mind around—frenetic faster than a speeding bullet while at a snail's pace. Delhi time has a meaning of its own—Indian Stretched Time is the best description. Patience is an absolute virtue teaching us westerners to live purely in the moment without expectation. Delhi is a total assault on the senses. Yet, I learned to embrace Delhi's incomparable diversity. Its frenzied tempo, splendid color, old with new, filth, pungent smells, and incessant hustle and bustle contradicted an overall voice of prayer and calm equanimity amongst the people. The Holy Cow rules over everything in Delhi and is the ONLY thing that will stop a bus (in fact Holy Cow had a whole new meaning when we 'bout collided with one). While *paradoxical* describes Delhi the best, the word *family* embodies India. There, the divine bleeds through into the unique and eternal face of Humanity and I was One, a part of a collective whole...a part of a family.

Do you understand the scientific basis of what has been done, and what has happened in your body? Please explain.

Absolutely—I have a firm understanding of HESCs, how they differ from other stem cells, the technology behind their creation, and the developmental gestation process in my body. I have read extensively, listened to lectures, and attended conferences. Word combinations like progenitor cells; growth factors; feeder cells; blastocyst; inner-cell mass; pluripotency; pre-differentiation; and stem lines or lineages are all woven into my vocabulary. I have been infused with the divine beginnings of life. Just one embryo has helped give life to over 500 patients who were deemed incurable or terminally ill. I see it as life giving life.

What is your current status, physically?

I feel better than I have felt in sixteen years of paralysis. Words cannot describe what it feels like to have “life” in my limbs that were lifeless.

Describe your current status emotionally. Has this journey affected you and does it still?

As I venture forth as one of the pioneer patients receiving human embryonic stem cell therapy I realize more and more that Dr. Geeta Shroff is at the eye of a global controversial storm and I am at the dawn of an age of discovery that will forever change the world.

Since beginning this journey I have found myself spiraling into a whirlpool of emotion. While sometimes spinning out of control, those intense emotions collided with an influx of stem cell information causing deep anxiety on all levels. As scientists and researchers speak of worldwide collaboration in stem cell research, I have witnessed outright ridicule for those blasted as radicals experimenting with new therapies in other countries. Egos abound and I am more perplexed. I am left feeling disheartened and surprised by negative responses to what scientists deem people like me to be desperate patients in search of stem cell tourism and miraculous unsafe treatments abroad. This world is cutthroat. I have come to understand that objective or factual science is inherently influenced by varying degrees of subjectivity or individualized opinions. Respected authorities seem to have adopted a dogmatic system of beliefs and will accept nothing but hard core scientific evidence, frowning upon those who have the courage and audacity to step out of the box and make quantum breakthroughs with clinical trials.

My story isn't enough. The fact that I am living proof that Human Embryonic Stem Cell Therapy works doesn't cut it in the scientific world. I am learning that the scientific world seemingly won't accept anecdotal patient testimonials as credible evidence for innovative technologies. I can't help but wonder what other revolutionary treatments are being rejected by scientific experts based on their subjective and somewhat limited visions of the world. The naysayers seem to outweigh the optimists.

I can't help but feel disillusioned by the insurmountable challenges that will need to be hurdled to see change take place. The economical factors alone are daunting. The average cost for a drug to be developed in the United States from crazy idea to having it available for sale is approximately 1.2 billion dollars. With my lay person's understanding, the FDA has extreme pressure imposed on them and have consequently gone into a very conservative mode. Venture capitalists and Biotech companies want to back innovative ideas but only with projects that are supported by scientific data that is disclosed and not just clinical trials. My guess is if human

embryonic stem cell research and treatment is ever approved and made legal in this country, it will be decades before it is offered for clinical trials, let alone available on the market.

Despite the politics, I have a thirst, a hunger, a deep yearning for more. What was put on hold for so many years with my paralysis seems reachable. Hope is restored and is back into my vocabulary. I believe it is possible to walk again. I can dream it, taste it, smell it, and feel every new movement and sensation in my body so I can genuinely *believe it*. I am living proof. I am defying the odds.

Sometimes I so badly wish I could rise up out of my wheelchair, walk, and “prove” to the world what is possible...but I realize that time is on my side. I am in no hurry. I understand that if I am choosing to take part in a revolutionary moment in the history of humanity, I first need to allow my body time to transform before the world pays attention.

What is your current status financially—who pays for this?

Having spent the past 15 years learning how to raise money for a non-profit I co-founded named Challenge Aspen, I am back in the fund raising mode again. I have raised the money to make this journey possible. It's not an overnight miracle cure. It takes money, time, commitment, and perseverance.

I am continuously reminded that my journey is *not* about me. While my ultimate goal is to walk again, mine is a journey for humanity. A million candles can burn from the light of just one single flame. That magnificent light never snuffs out, but burns eternally in the hearts of all who believe...or even those of us who are simply curious. My journey is about **others** lighting my way and helping me along my path. In turn I am able to quietly cast a golden ray of hope for humanity by holding true to my vision. My community has supported me, faithfully igniting the wick of my life waxing love, faith, compassion, and encouragement for each baby step of progress I make.

What is your current status spiritually—at some point medicine stops being mechanical and works on a deeper level; can you articulate your mind/body framework or belief system?

I have matured in the course of this past year and half and I have a greater understanding of what it takes for the human body to truly heal. My journey of awakening and healing my body is more than just the physical. I marvel at the possibility of how I can actualize divine consciousness within my own physicality. I believe that my physical body itself has its own consciousness, with each organ, tissue, and miniscule cell displaying their own consciousness respectively.

If I try to dissect my healing, my practice encompasses every aspect of my inner and outer self. I understand that my mental consciousness, which is manifested in my

thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and ideas, affects both the cells in my physical body and influences the expression of the human embryonic stem cells that have been injected into me. I consciously think in my mind: *perfection manifests perfection*. Through meditation, visualization and energetic healing I have explored tapping into my soul and intuitive or karmic self—depicted as my seeds of perception and inner knowingness—to manifest healing on a deeper cellular level. My healing practice also addresses my spiritual, and energetic self that I describe as a holographic matrix of vibrational energy that bleeds in and out of my physical self; and my emotional self, which stems from my feelings and opening my heart like a lotus blossom with a thousand petals that is filled with love, truth, and forgiveness.

Conflict of interest: Do you have any official or unofficial role as spokesperson for Dr. Shroff's clinic?

I have no official role as a spokesperson for Dr. Shroff, her clinic, or her treatment. I speak only from my experience, conveying my most authentic truth. I will never try to sell or pitch this treatment to anyone, nor will I speak on behalf of other patients. If individuals can open themselves to a mindset of curiosity to simply follow my journey, then that is my hope. People must take responsibility for choosing their own paths, for formulating their own opinions, and making their own choices. I will respect others as I hope that others will respect me.

I even thank the skeptics.

"It is not easy to be a pioneer --
but oh, it is fascinating! I would not
trade one moment, even the worst moment,
for all the riches in the world."

Elizabeth Blackwell

Interestingly, in 1849 Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to graduate from medical school, thereby becoming the first woman doctor of medicine in the modern era. Her success wasn't met without struggle, loneliness, and professional antagonism. One woman literally changed the face of medicine. As we enter into a new era of medical wonders in this next decade, I see Dr. Geeta Shroff as Elizabeth Blackwell, contributing to shaping the face of medicine today, filling it with renewed hope and possibility.

My confidence in my increased bodily sensations and motor function since receiving HESC treatment with Dr. Geeta Shroff has not waned. Through sharing my experience with the world, and by putting myself on the line to be a case study, I can be a catalyst to help instigate the changes that need to be addressed for more specific and reliable sensory and motor testing for Spinal Cord Injured patients.

Advice to newly injured, or to your veteran peers: should I stay or should I

go? If I go, how do I make contact, etc.?

Human Embryonic Stem Cell Therapy is a mission of hope and will change the world. I will continue to speak from my own experience witnessing my body awakening and coming to life after 15 ½ years of lifelessness and nothingness. What I know for sure is that patient testimonials count! The world can learn from those of us who are bold enough to take risks while keeping the faith and standing tall when the world is ostensibly against the odds. I will aspire toward spreading a message of hope in the face of challenge. It is our collective responsibility to be the manifestation of hope. We must do what we can to demonstrate positive change in our world. No vision is too big.

I encourage others to research as much as they can, while listening to their gut instincts and taking responsibility for making their own decisions.

Dr. Shroff requests to first email a detailed description of your medical condition from history to present day. If you are a spinal cord injured individual you will likely need to send digital MRIs via email in addition to your medical records. **Please be patient and wait for her response.** Dr. Shroff is an extremely busy lady as she is bombarded by patients from all over the globe. After her response, you may call her directly on her mobile telephone below.

DR. GEETA SHROFF

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Other Stuff...

Full Name: Amanda Catherine Boxel
Age: 41 years old – D.O.B. 12/15/1967

Occupation: Co-founder Challenge Aspen; now **Stem Cell Pioneer**, Professional Speaker, and Writer

Married? Not married but hoping to someday

Kids? Would love to have my own children

Hometown? Australian born living in Basalt, Colorado for the past twenty years...I guess that confirms I'm a local. I have my US Citizenship.

I live with Tucker, my golden retriever.

Type of Injury? T11/12 (formerly complete) SCI who is now defying the odds of regaining function after 15 ½ years of paralysis!

Last good novel you read? *Three Cups of Tea*—I have tremendous respect for Greg Mortenson.

Favorite guilty pleasure: A delicious orgasm—because I can now!...and then drinking expensive champagne with fresh raspberries afterwards!