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they were one step closer to developing sperm and eggs from embryonic stem cells.

Researchers from the University of Sheffield allowed donated human embryonic stem cells to develop into cells called embryoid bodies.

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Within two weeks, some of the cells showed a pattern of gene activity normally seen only in primordial germ cells - the cells that eventually form sperm and eggs. And some also contained proteins found only in maturing sperm.



The results show it will be feasible either to use stem-cell grafts to repair testes and ovaries damaged by cancer treatment, or even to grow reproductive cells for use in fertility treatment.

Harry Moore, of the University of Sheffield, warned it would take years to perfect the process. "This is probably 10 years away from the clinic. We have a lot more work to do, and we have to prove it is safe."

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