

This former Blue Jays pitcher changed his career to start his own cryopreservation business

Acorn Biolabs founder Drew Taylor explains the incredible potential of regenerative medicine.

By Kate Rae | April 08, 2020



Former baseball pitcher Drew Taylor founded Acorn Biolabs in 2017 as a way for people to cryopreserve their live cells for future medical use.

“For my grade seven science fair the theme was mechanics, and the goal was to take something apart to understand how it worked. Most kids tackled radios and toasters, but my project was a little different: I studied knees. I got to watch a knee replacement surgery, and it blew me away. The next day, I even got to watch as the patient walked across the room to hug and thank her doctor. I saw the good that medicine can do, but I also realized its limitations: ‘She’ll be back in 10 years for a new one,’ her doctor warned me. ‘And again, and again, each prosthesis having to be larger than the last.’

It made me think about the future of medicine — instead of putting plastic into someone’s body, what if we could grow bone and cartilage? That ‘what if’ started my fascination with regenerative medicine and charted my whole life.

I’m often asked to predict what will be happening in a decade, but I suspect that even my wildest guesses will underestimate what we’ll see. Curing diseases, growing cartilage and organs. It’s going to be incredible, especially when we factor in CRISPR, which is essentially cut and paste with the human genome. Someday, we will be able to remove bad code and replace it with good — editing out disease. There’s no end to this technology’s potential.

When it comes to cellular regeneration technology, there are 900 companies across the globe running 1,000 trials with 60,000 patients, looking at everything from Parkinson’s to macular degeneration and tendinopathy. The problem, though, is that our cells age, so by the time the technology is available, your cells might not be in their prime. At Acorn Biolabs, through simple hair follicle retrieval and storage, we’re capturing your live cells before they have a chance to deteriorate and keeping them safe. It’s a tiny deposit that has the potential to change — and save — your life down the road.

People are surprised when my baseball background comes up — I played in the minor leagues, pitching for the Blue Jays and Phillies while pursuing my PhD in biomedical engineering in the off-season. A shoulder tendon injury took me out of the game. It's the type of injury that cellular regeneration will one day be able to easily help repair. So, when I'm asked who Acorn's client is, I answer 'me.' I believe in the science, of course, but more importantly I'm a husband and father of three kids, and I will do anything to make sure my family has the very best access to healthcare." —*as told to Kate Rae*

Photo Credit: Jenna Marie Wakani



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