CLAIMS

1. A method for obtaining mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells suitable for administration comprising:

(i) culturing a population comprising mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells;

(ii) determining the amount of TGFβ1 released by the cells into the culture medium; and

(iii) selecting mesenchymal lineage precursor cells or stem cells for administration if and only if they release TGFβ1 into the culture medium in an amount of at least about 2800 pg/10^6 cells.

2. A method according to Claim 1, in which the population is enriched for mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells.

3. A method according to Claim 1 or 2, in which the mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells are human mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells.

4. A method according to Claim 1, 2 or 3, in which the biological activity comprises the cells' ability to stimulate collagen production in human annulus fibrous cells *in vitro*.

5. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the selected cells are suitable for administration for the treatment of degenerative disc disease.

6. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the culturing comprises seeding the cells in a culture vessel at a density of about 50,000 viable cells/cm^2.

7. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the population is cultured in chondrogenic basal medium supplemented with 0.5% bovine serum albumin.

8. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the population is cultured for at least 68 to 76 hours.

9. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the method comprises collecting a sample of the culture medium in which the cells were cultured.

10. A method according to Claim 9, in which the method comprises activating latent TGFβ1 in the culture medium prior to determining the amount of TGFβ1 in the culture medium.

11. A method according to Claim 10, in which activating latent TGFβ1 comprises adding an acid to the culture medium sample to lower the pH of the culture medium.

12. A method according to Claim 11, in which the method comprises concentrating the culture medium sample prior to lowering the pH.

13. A method according to Claim 11 or 12, in which, following addition of the acid, the culture medium is neutralised to a pH of 7.2 to 7.6.

14. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the method comprises determining the amount of TGFβ1 in the culture medium by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).

15. An isolated population of cells suitable for administration, in which the isolated population is obtained by a method according to any preceding claim.

16. An isolated population according to Claim 15, in which the mesenchymal lineage precursor or stem cells comprise at least 5% of the cell population.

17. A composition comprising an isolated population according to Claim 15 or 16, and a cryopreservative.

18. A composition comprising an isolated population according to Claim 15 or 16, in which the composition comprises hyaluronan.

19. Use of a composition comprising an isolated population according to Claim 15 or 16 in the manufacture of a medicament for treatment of degenerative disc disease.