



Position Paper on Umbilical Cord Blood Donations – 5/2013

The Junior Leagues of New Jersey State Public Affairs Committee (SPAC) is a non-partisan committee made up of representatives of the eight Junior Leagues in New Jersey with a combined membership of 3,000 women across the state. We advocate for initiatives and legislation to improve the quality of life for women and children.

The New Jersey Cord Blood Bank (NJCBB)¹ is a leader in the field of umbilical cord blood banking. It was established in 1996 to meet the needs of a growing population of cancer patients who became candidates for stem cell transplants after their stem cells were destroyed or damaged during aggressive treatments for cancer or other diseases. Cord blood transplantations have been shown to be curative in patients with a variety of serious diseases. The NJCBB became the first statewide, publicly funded, not for profit, umbilical cord blood and placental stem cell bank and education program. Placenta and umbilical cord blood are a rich source of non-controversial stem cells which give rise to blood cells (not embryonic stem cells).

The NJCBB is a public, not private, bank which means all donations collected are free of charge to the donor. The samples are processed, typed and subsequently included in the National Cord Blood Inventory, listed with the “Be the Match” Registry of the National Marrow Donor Program² for anyone to use. Private banking really doesn’t make sense. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics cord blood donation should be discouraged when the cord blood is stored in a bank that is to be directed for later personal or family use, because conditions that might be helped by cord blood stem cells already exist in the infant’s cord blood (pre-malignancies present in the stem cells). Private storage of cord blood as “biological insurance” is not recommended. Cord blood donation should be encouraged when the cord blood is stored for public use.³

SPAC has been working with the NJCBB since 2005, the same year New Jersey designated them as a State Public Cord Blood Bank. We took the position of supporting legislation that required doctors to notify their patients about the option to donate their baby’s cord blood and help raise awareness about the donations. Presently, we are supporting A554/S1711 which requires that 20% of the fee charged for the initial certified copy of a birth certificate be used to support the NJCBB. The NJCBB is in jeopardy of closing its doors and is in dire need of funding. Currently, the NJCBB receives no financial support from the state of NJ. It is funded primarily by the revenue derived from the stem cell units distributed to transplant centers, their blood collection and distribution operations, and by housing the Elie Katz Umbilical Cord Program (a family bank) within the New Jersey Cord Blood Bank (a public bank). Passage of this bill or a viable funding initiative is critical to allow the NJCBB to continue to fulfill its mission of providing lifesaving stem cells to those in need of a second chance at life and advance the field of regenerative medicine.

Junior Leagues of New Jersey State Public Affairs Committee (SPAC)

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Founded in 1901 by Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are charitable nonprofit organizations of women, developed as civic leaders, creating demonstrable community impact.

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The money raised (approximately \$500,000) will be used to: support the operations and expansion of the NJCBB; increase the number of ethnically diverse and racially diverse cord blood units available for patients (targeted efforts should be made to recruit underserved minorities – black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian individuals – to extend to them potential treatments afforded other segments of society (presently minorities are underrepresented on the Registry); expand collection sites, at high-birth and high-diversity hospitals partnering with the NJCBB and advance regenerative research efforts. SPAC believes that everyone should be given the same chance at life. Any samples not meeting the criteria to be “banked” can be used for non-clinical peer-reviewed research at renowned facilities like Rutgers or the New Jersey Cancer Institute.

Scientific advancements in cord blood transplants save many lives each year. In addition, the sustainability of the NJCBB is important to society and to the people of New Jersey. It provides lifesaving transplants for people around the world suffering from leukemia, lymphoma, sickle cell anemia, cerebral palsy, Hodgkin’s disease, blood diseases, hereditary and immune system disorders and close to 100 other life threatening illnesses.

Going Forward

The NJCBB is on the forefront of cutting edge research to advance the science of regenerative medicine by exploring existing stem cell sources and methods for inducing pluripotency in these cells. Cord blood has been shown to contain pluripotent stem cells that have the potential to differentiate into such tissues as neurologic, pancreatic, skin and cardiac. Extensive laboratory research is taking place to explore the potential therapeutic benefit of cord blood under these conditions.

The NJCBB is a deserving and valuable SPAC partner because we advocate on issues concerning the health and well-being of both women and children. Delegates will continue advocating for increased umbilical cord blood donations; increased donors diversity; and creative funding streams for public cord blood banks.

1. The New Jersey Cord Blood Bank (NJCBB). http://www.communitybloodservices.org/cb_njcbb.php
2. National Marrow Donor Program. <http://marrow.org>
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. *Cord blood banking for potential future transplantation. Section on Hematology/Oncology and section on Allergy/Immunology*. Retrieved on April 4, 2013 from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/165.full>