

METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL REACHES MILESTONE WITH 200th PEDIATRIC CORD BLOOD TRANSPLANT

*Texas Transplant Institute at Methodist Healthcare
Ranks as Third Largest Cord Blood Center in the U.S.*

Physicians at Methodist Children's Hospital recently performed the 200th pediatric cord blood transplant. Texas Transplant Institute, which encompasses the pediatric cord blood transplant program at Methodist Children's Hospital and the transplant programs at all the other Methodist Healthcare hospitals, is the third largest cord blood center in the country. This ranking includes unrelated cord blood transplants performed on children and adults and is based on data from the National Marrow Donor Program Transplant Center Directory.

"Our 200th pediatric cord blood transplant is a significant milestone in the use of donated cord blood in transplant therapy. Reaching this milestone has been a team effort that has included physicians, nurses, lab personnel and support staff," said Ka Wah Chan, M.D., medical director of the Texas Transplant Institute's pediatric blood and marrow stem cell transplant program.

Umbilical cord blood transplants are increasingly being used among patients with such life-threatening diseases as leukemia, lymphoma, bone marrow failure syndromes, immunodeficiency disorders, and inherited metabolic disorders, according to the National Marrow Donor Program. The use of donated cord blood cells in stem cell transplant therapy—little known even a decade ago—offers an additional option for patients without a matched donor in their family. Cord blood tissue-type matching does not need to be as biologically stringent as bone marrow for a successful transplant.

"Because tissue types are inherited, patients are most likely to match the tissue type of someone who shares their racial or ethnic heritage. Of the nine million tier one donors who sign up world wide as potential bone marrow donors, 75 percent are Caucasian, so only about 25 percent of the donors are appropriate for those who are racially or ethnically diverse," explained Dr. Chan.

"Of the top cord blood transplant centers in the country, our center probably has performed the largest number of cord blood transplants in Hispanic patients. This has given us the opportunity to look in detail at the successful use of cord blood transplants in Hispanics. It also gives us access to a unique source of information that may lead to further advances in the management of transplants in Hispanics and insights into the use of cord blood with other ethnic minorities that will help save lives," he added.

With the mother's consent, cord blood is collected from the umbilical cord and placenta immediately after a baby is born. After the cord blood is collected, it is preserved at a cord blood bank and available to the public. Because it is readily available, it is particularly useful for those patients who need a transplant performed quickly. Recent studies have found that using cord blood cells can be effective as using a marrow donor and can provide more options for patients, including ethnic minorities.

Methodist Healthcare's Texas Transplant Institute (TTI) offers one of the most comprehensive cord blood transplant programs in the country and is an active member of the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplant Consortium, a collaborative effort of over 80 pediatric transplant programs worldwide that addresses specific issues for children. TTI also participates in protocols sponsored by the Clinical Trials Network of the National Institutes of Health and the Children's Oncology Group. The facility includes a new family-oriented outpatient clinic that serves pediatric hematology, oncology and bone marrow transplant patients. The clinic features a spacious waiting room, play room and private exam and infusion rooms.