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Bloodworks Marks 20 Years of Leadership in Cord Blood

World Cord Blood Day is November 15

Seattle, WA – This year marks the 20th anniversary of Bloodworks Northwest (formerly Puget Sound Blood Center) Cord Blood Services that collects umbilical cord blood in delivery rooms of local hospitals after new mothers have given birth. Cord blood is an important, non-controversial source of stem cells that can be used in the treatment of 80 different life-threatening diseases – including leukemia and other forms of cancer, metabolic and immune system disorders, and sickle cell anemia.

November 15 is World Cord Blood Day: a way to increase public awareness about the importance of cord blood donation and its promise of saving more lives and increasing the availability of stem cells for transplantation.

“Despite 35,000 successful cord blood transplants worldwide and the urgent need for stem cells for medical treatment, for the majority of U.S. births cord blood is simply discarded,” said Rebecca Haley, MD, medical director of Cord Blood Services. “When transplanted, stem cells offer patients with life-threatening diseases and conditions new hope for recovery.”

Each year about 10,000 people will need bone marrow or stem cell transplants, but less than half receive one. Stem cell transplants rebuild bone marrow destroyed by chemotherapy or diseases that affect red cell production. While some people find a genetically-matched family member to donate bone marrow for transplant, 70 percent of patients depend on donations from unrelated individuals who have matching tissue types.

“Cord blood collection is a painless procedure that does not interfere with the birth, or with mother-and-child bonding following delivery; there is no risk to either mother or baby,” Haley said. “Stem cells collected by Bloodworks are made available to patients worldwide through the National Marrow Donor Program.”

Bloodworks created the first umbilical cord blood program in the Pacific Northwest in 1997, and today is one of only seven licensed cord blood banks nationwide. Program partnerships with 12 hospitals in Washington, Oregon and Hawaii resulted in the collection of nearly 5,300 cords in 2016. These expanding hospital partnerships create the opportunity to meet the needs of even more patients requiring stem cell transplants.

Bloodworks also partners with several leading biomedical organizations focused on stem cell research and innovative treatments. Research demonstrates that medical science is only beginning to understand the potential impact of stem cell therapies in new areas of regenerative medicine, and in treatments for spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, autism, Type 1 diabetes and other conditions. Organizations interested in working with Bloodworks to advance stem cell research are invited to contact inquiry@bloodworksnw.org.

The cord blood program is enabled by the generous contributions of new moms/parents, as well as trained delivery room staff at participating hospitals who make the recovery and banking of cord blood stem cells possible. Bloodworks also acknowledges the vital support of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in its cord blood program.

“Bloodworks is committed to our role in providing comprehensive, high quality healthcare for the communities we serve,” Haley said. “That includes a commitment to best clinical practices in women’s health, childbirth and neonatal care, as well as successful treatment of cancer.”

Expectant moms interested in donating their baby’s umbilical cord blood or finding out more about this lifesaving program can learn more and pre-enroll at: BloodworksNW.org/cordblood; by email at cordblood@BloodworksNW.org; or by calling 1-800-DONATE-1 Ext. 6696.

Bloodworks welcomes financial gifts and grants to support our Cord Blood Services that advance the future of stem cell therapies and health sciences. Contributions can be made online at bloodworksnw.org/donate/financial-gifts .

Keri’s Story – Keeping Her Father’s Legacy Alive

Potential interview: Keri Tawney is a Bloodworks NW Cord Blood Donor. Blog post: <http://psbcblog.com/2017/11/giving-birth-unique-opportunity-to-give-life.html> says she’s a donor because her father died of lymphoma in 1998, needing a stem cell transplant. He died on the waiting list. On November 18th, 2006, Keri donated cord blood when she delivered her daughter. She did it in memory of her dad.

About cord blood

Cord blood is rich in stem cells, which are the “parent” cells of all blood cells. These cells are found in the bone marrow of adults and in the circulatory system of infants. Cord blood stem cells can be used in place of bone marrow stem cells when a matching bone marrow donor cannot be found. Once transplanted, stem cells migrate to the bone marrow, where they begin creating healthy blood cells. This enables the recipient to reconstitute their immune system. Patients are less likely to reject stem cells from cord blood than stem cells from donated adult bone marrow.

About BloodworksNW

Bloodworks (formerly Puget Sound Blood Center) is backed by 73 years of Northwest history and 250,000 donors. It is local, nonprofit, independent, volunteer-supported and community-based. A recognized leader in transfusion medicine, Bloodworks serves patients in more than 90 hospitals in Washington, Oregon and Alaska — partnering closely with local hospitals to deliver the highest level of patient care. Comprehensive services include blood components, complex cross-matching, specialized lab services for organ transplants, care for patients with blood disorders, and collection of cord blood stem cells for cancer treatment. Bloodworks Research Institute performs leading-edge research in blood biology, transfusion medicine, blood storage and treatment of blood disorders. Patients with traumatic injuries, undergoing surgeries or organ transplantation, or receiving treatment for cancer and blood disorders all depend on our services, expertise, laboratories and research. For more information, visit bloodworksnw.org

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