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## CordLife set to post profit, recruit staff

By CHEN HUIFEN

HOMEGROWN tissue bank CordLife is set to return to the black in its current financial year and is looking to hire more people for expansion.

The Australian-listed company recently posted a A\$1.59 million (S\$1.65 million) net profit for the half-year ended Dec 31, 2008, up from A\$145,000 a year earlier. Revenue jumped 59.7 per cent to A\$11.8 million.

"We're pretty much on track to be in the black," CordLife CEO Steven Fang told BT.

CordLife stores and processes cord blood units – a rich source of stem cells. The units are collected from the umbilical cords of newborn babies.

The company's latest half-year performance was buoyed by a 25 per cent increase in enrolment in Singapore to 1,938. Rising local awareness of the potential of stem cells and an enhancement to the Baby Bonus scheme that allows parents to pay for cord blood banking through the Children Development Account helped fuel business.

Despite the global economic downturn, CordLife is upbeat. Clinical trials are under way in the West to use stem cells to treat type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis, Mr Fang said.

"The therapy space is going to be a deciding factor for long-term future

growth," he said. "It's coming to a point where there is going to be mainstream use. In the past, cord blood banking was all about having it there and hoping you would never have to use it. That's changing. We're looking at a number of new therapies."

In its latest first-half, CordLife also benefited from the merger of its 57 per cent-owned subsidiary Biocell with CellSense to create the largest private cord blood bank in Australia.

Biocell acquired CellSense by issuing new shares. As a result, CordLife ended up with a 28.4 per cent stake in Biocell and a \$1.4 million gain on deemed disposal.



FILE PHOTO

**Mr Fang:** 'The therapy space is going to be a deciding factor for long-term future growth'

Including Biocell clients, CordLife had about 24,000 cord blood banking clients as at last month. Singapore is its biggest market with about 15,000 clients.

Beyond Singapore and Australia, CordLife oper-

ates tissue banking facilities in Hong Kong, Indonesia and India. Across the group, it is looking to add 20-50 staff this year to the 180 it now employs.

Most of the new positions will be in sales and marketing, facility manage-

ment and laboratory processing of units collected.

In Singapore, the company is scouting for more space to allow for expansion. It now operates out of a 5,200 sq ft facility in Science Park 3.

### Article Highlights:

- CordLife looks set to return to black this financial year and continue hiring.
- Revenue jumped 59.7% to A\$11.8 million in 2008, when compared against 2007.
- CordLife's subsidiary, BioCell has merged with CellSense to become the largest private cord blood bank in Australia.

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