

Date: February 10, 2014		[] Full Color [] Black & White	
Publication: The Philippine Star		Circulation:	
Section: Health & Medicine	Page: 17	Col/Cm: 150	Base Rate: 371
Title: Cord blood stem cells- a new hope for cerebral palsy, neuroblastoma patients		Ad Value: P 55,650.00	
Writer:		Media Value: P 222,600.0	

Cord blood stem cells – a new hope for cerebral palsy, neuroblastoma patients

In the Philippines, there are more patients with cerebral palsy than those with polio, spinal lesions and other movement disorders combined.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) which affects about 1-2% of the total Philippine population, along with other brain disorders like Neuroblastoma, are considered as the most difficult types of illnesses to cope with, especially for young children. CP severely impairs the development and use of motor skills. Neuroblastoma, meanwhile, is a childhood cancer whose symptoms include the inability to empty the bladder, paralysis of the hips, legs, feet and uncontrolled movements.

Stem cell transplantation has shown encouraging results to treat these diseases. A painless, risk-free and effective source of hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs), umbilical cord blood is a stem cell source duly approved by Department of Health. Due to its ability to differentiate into various types of cells namely red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, it helps the body in replenishing blood and regenerating the immune system.

Success stories

Although there has only been one cord blood stem cell transplantation conducted locally, more than 30,000 have been performed worldwide since 1988.

Justin (alias) was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at a tender age of one and half years old. Over the course of one year, the child had to endure numerous rounds of high-dose chemotherapy to treat his condition. Chemotherapy destroyed cancer cells, but at the same time also killed normal cells. Fortunately, Justin's parents had his cord blood stored at birth with Cordlife. The cord blood stem cells were infused back to his body after a course of chemotherapy in January 2011 at Queen Mary Hospital and he was discharged from hospital after 3 months.

"The exact cause of neuroblastoma is unknown, and treating it depends on a case-to-case basis. Surgery may be effective with or without chemotherapy but alternative treatments like stem cell transplantation for high-risk and advanced stage neuroblastomas shows encouraging results," said Dr. Allan Racho, head of Pediatric Blood Disorders and Tumor Unit, St. Luke's Medical Center, Quezon City.

While studies are still confirming its efficacy for



Baby Georgia and her family at the present time. It was only after Cordlife put the family in touch with a renowned neurosurgeon that enabled Georgia to be infused with her own cord blood, also stored by Cordlife. Her conditions have improved since then.

cerebral palsy, several stem cell infusion cases were reported to have encouraging results, bringing hope and improving lives of many families worldwide.

An accident at birth 2.5 years ago deprived Baby Georgia of oxygen to her brain, resulted in cerebral palsy. The damage to the toddler's brain caused her to move involuntarily, suffer from muscle spasms and have up to 50 seizures a day. It was only after Cordlife put the family in touch with a renowned neurosurgeon that enabled Georgia to be infused with her own cord blood, also stored by Cordlife. Her conditions have improved since then.

"Georgia has made good progress since her stem cell infusion. She has better visual focus and eye contact with adults during play. She has more vocalization and tries to 'sing-a-song' by making different sounds to nursery rhymes. Georgia has improved postural and head control and is observed to be reaching more with her arms," said Jaclyn Tan, consultant occupational therapist at OzWorks Therapy.

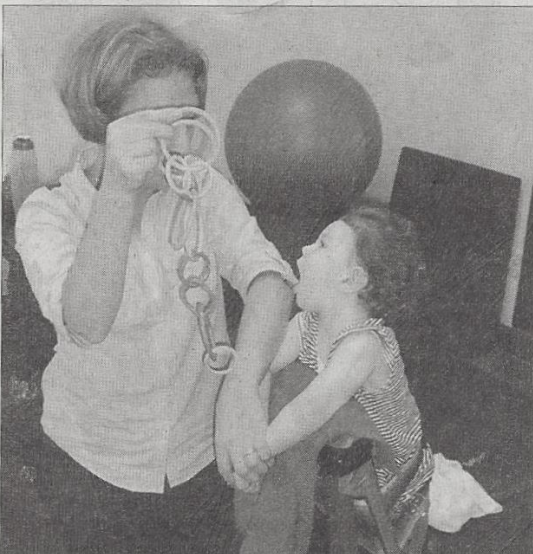
Chloe Levine from the United States, another child with cerebral palsy, is now attending school and living an active life after undergoing an experimental stem cell infusion at Duke University Medical Center in the US when she was two years old.

The importance of foresight

What Justin and Georgia Conn both benefited from, is their parents' decision to secure their umbilical cord blood even without the foreknowledge of the health challenges life will throw at them. Both parents entrusted what they deemed to be an important medical resource with Cordlife, Asia's most respected cord blood bank with more than 12 years of experience and published cord blood release track record for treatment.

Locally, Cordlife Philippines offers Filipino parents the same chance to safe keep their baby's cord blood so that it is readily available when a need arises, and as medical technology concerning brain disorders among other illnesses continually evolve. Having a local processing and storage facility also helps to lower the cost of storage, and these savings are, in turn, passed on to the Cordlife clients.

"No parent wishes his/her child to experience the heartbreaking effects of any illness," said Dr. Arvin Faundo, medical director of Cordlife Philippines. "What we at Cordlife offer them is the chance to prepare for potential eventualities—to secure the future well-being and happiness of their family."



Baby Georgia is engaged in a physical therapy session.