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29 June, 2010 - Neurosurgeon Keith Goh makes history by being among Asia's first to treat cerebral palsy with cord blood stem cells

From leukemia to neuroblastoma and now cerebral palsy?

Physicist and mathematician Stephen Hawking; author, painter, and poet Christy Brown; comedian and actress Geri Jewel; author and human rights advocate Anne McDonald.

Aside from making their mark in their respective fields, these people have one more thing in common—they could have been more successful if they had another chance at life without cerebral palsy.

A term to describe a group of neurological disorders characterized by lack of control in body movement, muscle coordination, and impeded brain development, cerebral palsy is one of the most common congenital childhood disorders. In the United States, an estimated 500,000 children and adults have the condition.

Here in the country, the Central Palsied Association of the Philippines estimates that for every 1,000 live births in the country, 3.5 cases are affected with this disorder. This means that there are roughly about 300,000 Filipinos suffering from cerebral palsy.

A New Chapter in Cerebral Palsy Treatment

But all may not be lost for cerebral palsy sufferers. In fact, just recently, Singapore-based neurosurgeon Dr. Keith Goh made history by being among the first in Asia to successfully administer treatment for cerebral palsy with cord blood stem cells.

He was responsible for the stem cell treatment of Singapore-based Australian couple Michael and Louise Conn's first-born child, Georgia, who underwent an unfortunate incident during her birth which then resulted to cerebral palsy.

Louise Conn narrates that Georgia's condition, and the search for treatment was perhaps one of the most difficult challenges that they had to face. "We knew we had Georgia's cord blood banked. It took us over 18 months and an enormous amount of research, mainly on the internet, to find information about the potential for using stem cells, the risks – if any, and especially using a child's own cord blood, to help Cerebral Palsy children," narrates Louise Conn. "We got in contact with CordLife to see if it was possible to transport Georgia's cord blood stem cells over to the United States. Then CordLife put us in contact with Dr. Keith Goh, to discuss our plans further."

Dr. Keith Goh championed Georgia's treatment through the hospital system and Singapore's Ministry of Health. And finally on September 8 2009, Georgia received her own cord blood stem cells. "No international journeys and new medical teams. All done in a hospital which was 10 minutes away from home and in one day," quipped Louise Conn.

Georgia's condition improved dramatically since the cord blood stem cell infusion. Notably, there were significant changes in Georgia's temperament, concentration, and engagement. She developed better visual focus and eye contact, had enhanced postural as well as head control and had been observed to move with more coordination after the treatment.

The Promise of Stem Cell Therapy

Cord blood stem cells, known as the building blocks of the blood and immune system are collected from the umbilical cord immediately after birth. "Stem cells in the cord blood possess the increased ability to adapt, revitalize, and replenish the blood and immune system by developing into red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets," explains Dr. Goh. "For children with cerebral palsy or similar neurological insults, it is possible that stem cell treatment holds the key to improving their lives. Most importantly, since these treatments are done with their own stem cells, they are safe and viable."

Cord blood stem cells can also be used to treat immediate family members for various diseases when the need arises. "The chance of locating a cord blood match within the family is 60 percent higher compared to a bone marrow match," notes Dr. Arvin Faundo, Medical Director, CordLife Philippines.

Since the first cord blood transplant in 1988, cord blood stem cells have been medically proven to treat more than 80 diseases including reconstruction of the immune and blood system after chemotherapy or radiation, in cancer patients, and those being treated for bone marrow failure syndromes, blood disorders, immune deficiencies, and metabolic disorders.

"Current areas of active research and ongoing clinical trials worldwide include cerebral palsy, brain injury, stroke and heart disease, liver diseases, cartilage regeneration, eye disorders, spinal cord injuries, and auto immune disorders," says Dr. Faundo. "Once these advances translate to successful therapies, any family who has stored their child's cord blood stem cells, can be part of this medical revolution and will have more medical options available to them."

Unlike any other procedure that could go wrong during pregnancy and delivery, cord blood banking is safe and easy and it does not pose any risk to the mother or the baby. Choosing to store your child's cord blood stem cells is a big leap towards achieving a more secure and healthier future for you and your family.

CordLife, the only international cord blood banking facility in the Philippines recognizes health as a top priority for Filipino families. "With this, Filipino parents no longer have to risk sending their baby's cord blood abroad for long-term storage," says celebrity advocate Christine Bersola-Babao. "This will be beneficial to Filipino families."

The CordLife facility at the UP-AyalaLand Technohub in Diliman is built to the world-class standards of institutes such as the American Association of Blood Banks and International Organization for Standardization. The CordLife facility uses the first of its kind, a fully-automated cell-processing system called Sepax , to perform a highly sterile and precise approach to cell separation, with cell recovery rate up to 99 percent.



“Everybody deserves to be cured from diseases and to live well,” says Babao.

Indeed, making a mark, being a major influence and inspiring others to do better is a choice. And it all begins with the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of cord blood banking.

For more information on CordLife and cord blood banking, visit www.cordlife.com/ph or call 710-9195

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