

## For Immediate Release

# First Cystic Fibrosis Cord Blood Collection A Major Investment in Hope

### Key Points:

- **First cord blood collected in hope of treating patients with cystic fibrosis**
- **Collection and storage provided free of charge by BioCell and CyGenics**
- **Program is offered to Australian and New Zealand families with a child with cystic fibrosis**

**Wednesday 26 April 2006** – Clinical history was made at The Mercy Hospital in Werribee on Easter Saturday, when baby Aiden Brundell donated his cord blood in the hope that his precious stem cells could one day rejuvenate sister Mikaela’s lungs, which are failing from cystic fibrosis (CF), and save her life. This first collection of cord blood from the sibling of a child with CF is a major step towards treating the deadly effects of Australia’s most common severe genetic condition among children, for which there is no cure.

Aiden’s cord blood collection and storage was free of charge, thanks to a generous donation by private cord blood bank, Biocell Pty Ltd and its parent company CyGenics Ltd.

Professor Bob Williamson, spokesperson for Cystic Fibrosis Victoria, said the fantastic generosity of Biocell and CyGenics to Cystic Fibrosis Australia could extend to collecting as many as 36 cord bloods over three years for families with cystic fibrosis in Australia and New Zealand. This represents a commitment valued at more than A\$100,000 (approximately US\$75,000) over the three years.

Professor Williamson said, “Everyone agrees that the use of cells from cord blood poses no ethical problems. They are adult stem cells, but because they are taken at birth they are far more flexible and grow more easily than most such cells.”

He added “Cord blood stem cells represent a real glimmer of hope for cystic fibrosis sufferers, with their potential to physically rebuild lungs previously considered damaged beyond repair.”

“The latest research in Australia, Germany and the United States shows that stem cells from cord blood can give cells that are very similar to lung cells. In a mouse

model for cystic fibrosis, the cells help to cure the disease. And here in Melbourne, at The Alfred Hospital, it has been shown that when lungs are transplanted into patients, they appear to take up stem cells from the recipient and integrate them into the airways.”

Mr Ian Brown, Managing Director of BioCell and Chief Operating Officer of CyGenics said, “This is an exciting initiative for BioCell to be involved in. The therapeutic potential for stem cells, in not only cystic fibrosis applications, are looking very promising.”

Professor Williamson concluded, “There are about one million Australians who are healthy carriers of the cystic fibrosis gene. Carriers are completely healthy, but if two carriers have a child, there is a one in four chance that the baby will be affected by cystic fibrosis. Despite a baby being born with CF in Australia every four days, over 90% of parents are unaware they are healthy carriers of the deadly gene.”

“Medical researchers, with the support of the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, are working tirelessly to find a cure for cystic fibrosis. The collection and storage of cord blood stem cells represents a real investment in hope for cystic fibrosis sufferers like Mikaela Brundell. The research is under way to use these stem cells in the future in an ethical way, to improve the quality and longevity of Mikaela’s life.”

### **About Cystic Fibrosis**

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is Australia’s most common life shortening genetic condition. Sadly there is no cure. Many children with CF used to die in early childhood, but recent advances in treatment have extended life expectancy to 30 years and more.

CF primarily affects the lungs and digestive system, and causes a build up of thick sticky mucus in the body resulting in repeated lung infections and poor digestion. To keep healthy, people with CF must receive chest physiotherapy several times a day to keep their lungs free of mucus and consume enzyme tablets with each meal to help them digest their food. Regular antibiotic treatment and periods of hospitalisation are often required.

Approximately 3000 Australians have CF and a further one million others are healthy carriers of the defective cystic fibrosis gene. If two carriers met and have a child there is a one in four chance for each pregnancy that the child will be affected by cystic fibrosis. In Australia, 1 in every 2500 births results in a child with CF.

For further information about CF please visit: [www.cfv.org.au](http://www.cfv.org.au) or [www.cysticfibrosis.org.au](http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au)

### **About CyGenics Ltd**

CyGenics is a cell therapy services company focused on the development and commercialisation of adult stem cell-related products, services, applications and technologies. From its headquarters in Australia, CyGenics operates five subsidiaries: Singapore-based CordLife and Australia-based BioCell (tissue banking services, in particular, cord blood banking), Cell Sciences (consumable cell culture products), Cytomatrix (cell therapeutics and technology development) based in Boston, USA, and

CytoVations (new product development) based in New Jersey, USA. CyGenics is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, under the symbol CYN. For more information, please visit [www.cygenics.com](http://www.cygenics.com).

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