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News from Upstate

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Upstate opens Cord Blood Bank in a ribbon-cutting ceremony



SYRACUSE, N.Y.— Upstate Medical University officially opened the Upstate Cord Blood Bank in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, Feb. 9.

The \$15 million, 20,000 square foot facility features a state of the art processing laboratory and cryogenic storage containers that can store nearly 14,500 units of cord blood. The building is located on Upstate's Community Campus, 4910 Broad Road in Syracuse, home to Upstate's obstetric services.

The bank will collect, test, process, store and distribute umbilical cord blood donated by families throughout central and northern New York to be used by those in need of life-saving medical treatments and for medical research.

The bank is currently accepting cord blood donations from families who give birth at Upstate's Community Campus. Cord blood donations will be accepted from families who give birth at Crouse Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center as early as summer 2017. Agreements with other area hospitals will be forthcoming.

Umbilical cord blood is blood that remains in the placenta and umbilical cord after childbirth. Cord blood that is not donated is discarded as medical waste. It is a rich source of hematopoietic stem cells that have the potential of being used in the treatment of dozens of diseases, like blood cancers and bone marrow diseases such as sickle cell anemia.

State Sen. John DeFrancisco played a key role in securing the \$15 million funding for the building, enabling Syracuse to have one of only two public cord blood banks in New York and one of only 32 in the United States.

"The Upstate Cord Blood Bank responds directly to the mission of our academic medical center," said Upstate President Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP. "It is a community resource that will improve the health of individuals here, throughout our region and beyond. Whether the cord blood is used for transplantation or research, we are providing hope of better health and new treatments."

Laraque-Arena said she was grateful for the support of New York State Sen. John DeFrancisco. "I applaud Senator DeFrancisco's efforts to move this project forward and to enable Upstate to be at the forefront of this impactful initiative," Laraque-Arena said.

"The Upstate Cord Blood Bank is a project near and dear to my heart," said DeFrancisco. "It's a project that has been a long time coming, and I am absolutely ecstatic that the public bank is now open and receiving donations of umbilical cord blood. I look forward to witnessing the many cures that will result from having the use of cord blood available right here in Upstate."

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Upstate's Robert Corona, DO, MBA, professor and chair of the Department of Pathology, said the Upstate Cord Blood Bank would put to good use what is often referred to as medical waste. "The blood from the umbilical cord and placenta, "cord blood," contains hematopoietic stem cells that have potential to treat many diseases including cancer, genetic disorders and blood disorders," he said. "What was once medical waste becomes a source of life saving cells and a significant contribution to the field of regenerative medicine. Stem cells show great potential in treating all sorts of neurologic disorders including metabolic disorders, spastic cerebral palsy and autism. We are truly fortunate to have a new Cord Blood Bank in our community as a cutting-edge patient care and research resource."

Nicholas Greco, PhD, executive director and tissue bank director of the Upstate Cord Blood Bank, said the use of cord blood in treatment for various diseases has expanded. "Historically, cord blood from public banks in transplantation has focused on the safety and use in regenerating dysfunctional or damaged bone marrow. But, within the last decade, family banks have focused on using cord blood- and cord tissue-derived stem cells to replace or regenerate human cells, tissue or organs, to restore or establish normal function (regenerative medicine). These emerging uses, extend patient options for treatment and cures."

SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher applauded the opening of the Upstate Cord Blood Bank. "New York's ongoing investment in medical research and education provides far reaching benefits for our students and faculty as well as communities not only in New York state but around the globe," Zimpher said. "Congratulations to President Laraque-Arena and the entire SUNY Upstate community on the opening of this new facility, which is certain to advance research in a vital field of study, enhance patient care, and provide new educational opportunities for students."

Designation as a public cord blood bank

The designation of Upstate Cord Blood Bank as a public blood bank is important in that there is no cost to donate and donated cord blood is available to anyone who needs it. Once donated, the cord blood will be stored in the bank and made available to transplant centers in the United States and throughout the world for patients needing life-saving transplants. The cord blood units will be listed initially on the Bone Marrow Donors Worldwide registry and on the Be The Match registry maintained by the National Marrow Donor Program, which maintains a large listing of cord blood units available for transplant. Those units that are not suitable for transplantation will be made available to researchers, both at Upstate Medical University and around the country.

The Upstate Cord Blood Bank will in the near future open a family cord blood bank that will collect, test, process, store, and distribute a baby's umbilical cord blood only for use by families who have a need for future use. An initial fee and annual fee will be charged for collection, processing and storage of umbilical cord blood in the family bank.

The Upstate Cord Blood Bank will operate under strict guidelines and protocols, established by state and federal health organizations, including the state Health Department, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), AABB and the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT).

As is currently under way at Crouse Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center, Upstate will work with regional hospitals to develop guidelines and agreements to enable mothers who deliver in these facilities the ability to donate their cord blood for free.

Upstate officials hope the cord blood bank will ultimately receive donations from 10,000 births a year, which would represent 50 percent of the approximately 20,000 births in Central New York annually.

How is cord blood donated

Once a mother has delivered her baby and after the umbilical cord is clamped and cut as is done with all deliveries, a medical provider will insert a needle into the umbilical vein that is still attached to the placenta. The process, which takes less than 10 minutes, yields about 3 to 5 ounces of cord blood, which is then sent to the Upstate Cord Blood Bank for testing, processing and storage. There is no pain for the mother or baby nor is their safety compromised during the delivery.

Treatments with cord blood

Stem cell transplants from umbilical cord blood, researchers say, may be more suitable for transplants than the more common stem cells taken from bone marrow as treatment for various cancers. Umbilical cord blood has an underdeveloped immune cell system providing less of a chance that the transplanted cells will attack the recipient's immune system. Hematopoietic stem cells are capable of forming all different types of blood forming cells in the human body. They are used to treat some cancers, metabolic disorders and immunodeficiency diseases, and bone marrow disorders, such as sickle cell anemia. Cord blood is rich in these hematopoietic stem cells.

Research with cord blood

Umbilical cord blood stem cells will be valuable for medical research, in studies seeking to

advance new treatments for cancer and using cord blood to treat and cure diseases that are not cancers, that is, in regenerative medicine applications. These latter applications may regenerate new tissues such as heart, muscle, skin, and neuronal tissues. Some Upstate researchers have expressed an interest in working with stem cells from umbilical cord blood. An available supply of cord blood would enhance and expedite research studies on finding new treatments for various diseases.

Upstate Cord Blood Bank credits: Architect: Francis Cauffman, New York, N.Y. Engineer: Buro Happold Engineers, New York, N.Y., Project Management: Pike Construction Company, Rochester, N.Y.; General Contractor: Murnane Building Contractors, East Syracuse, N.Y.

Caption: Cutting the ribbon to open the Upstate Cord Blood Bank are, from left, Nicole Moore, the first donor to the cord blood bank (she donated the cord blood after her baby Jackson was born Feb. 2); State Sen. John DeFrancisco; Jared Saya, who received a cord blood transplant as a young child for a cancer treatment; Nick Greco, PhD., executive director and tissue bank director of the Upstate Cord Blood Bank; Upstate Medical University President Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP; and GERALYN SAYA, Jared's mother.

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