

FOCUS ON HEALTH

The Miracle of Birth And Stem Cell Science May Save The Lives Of Others

(NAPSA)—Every day, throughout America, about 11,000 babies enter our world. With each birth, we have the opportunity to preserve a gift, one as precious as life itself, the stem cells from the newborn child's umbilical cord. Umbilical cord blood ("cord blood") is the blood that remains in a newborn baby's umbilical cord after a child is born. Cord blood contains highly valuable stem cells—special cells that divide and reproduce to form new blood and immune cells. Originally discarded as medical waste, cord blood is now known to have important medical value as a readily available, rich and non-controversial source of those life-giving cells.

In fact, stem cells from cord blood have been used in the treatment of over 45 life-threatening or debilitating diseases including certain cancers, such as leukemia and various immune and genetic disorders.

For instance, a 7 year-old girl in Florida battled acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) much of her life. A very serious and life-threatening disease, ALL is the most common form of childhood cancer and is diagnosed in about 3,000 children each year in the United States. While awaiting the birth of their second child, the parents learned that a cord blood stem cell transplant might offer permanent remission and a cure for their daughter's leukemia. Prior to birth, it was determined that the newborn's blood and tissue type would be a perfect match for their 7 year-old daughter. The



A grateful family—Newborn's cord blood stem cells helped save the life of her older sister.

parents decided to collect and preserve their infant's cord blood stem cells at delivery. Soon after, the older daughter underwent a transplant using her baby sister's stem cells. The transplant was successful and after recovery, she returned home and is doing very well.

While the science behind these transplants is quite complex, collecting and preserving cord blood is extremely simple. After a baby is born and the umbilical cord is cut, doctors collect the blood that remains in the umbilical cord into a sterile blood collection bag. This easy 2 to 4 minute procedure is painless to mother and child and does not interfere with the birthing process. After collection, the blood is tested and cryo-preserved, meaning stored in a frozen state, for future potential use.

Unfortunately, however, this valuable cord blood is collected and preserved in fewer than two percent of the 4 million annual births in the United States. Clearly, more parents need to be made aware of the usefulness of umbilical cord blood and of the strides being achieved using cord blood stem cells in the treatment of diseases.

Every year, there are approximately 10,000 patients who die awaiting a bone marrow stem cell transplant. That's a lot of lives that little babies' cord blood stem cells may someday help to save.

For more information on preserving your baby's umbilical cord blood stem cells, please contact Viacord toll-free at 1-866-565-2240, go to www.viacord.com or speak to your medical caregiver.