

Marking 20 Years Of Cord Blood Transplants

(NAPSA)—Since 1988, 14,000 umbilical cord blood (UCB) stem cell transplants have been performed to save patients' lives in all parts of the world. And now, 20 years later, the medical community—along with the first UCB transplant recipient—is honoring the pioneering doctors who made these procedures possible.

During the 6th Annual International Umbilical Cord Blood Transplantation Symposium, Matthew Farrow—the first human ever cured with a transplantation of UCB stem cells—paid tribute to three doctors whose work led to his treatment. Farrow was treated when he was 5 years old for Fanconi's anemia, a fatal blood disorder.

Dr. Eliane Gluckman, M.D., who performed the procedure, was honored with Hal Broxmeyer, Ph.D., the researcher who first discovered that cord blood was a bountiful source of stem cells, and Joanne Kurtzberg, M.D., Farrow's referring physician. Also, Lawrence Petz, M.D., who has organized the Symposium since its inception and edits www.cordbloodforum.org, received an award for his contributions to the field.

"I was aware that the transplant I was going to receive was a new type of treatment, and I wanted to try this method to help other people," said Farrow. "I am so glad I did because it really was a stepping stone to many great things."

Since Farrow's treatment, UCB stem cells have been used to treat more than 70 diseases, which were originally treated with bone-marrow stem cell transplants. Transplantation was originally used for patients who did not have a matched adult donor for bone marrow, as recipients and donors do not need to share as close of a tissue (HLA) type match for cord blood transplantation.



Matthew Farrow, the first person cured by a cord blood transplant, honors the doctors who made his procedure possible.

With the demonstrated effectiveness of UCB transplantation in saving the lives of patients who could not otherwise be transplanted, the use of UCB has expanded to become the most frequently used source of stem cells for children throughout the United States and is also frequently used for adults.

At the symposium, cord blood patients recognized two additional pioneers. Pablo Rubinstein, M.D., was recognized for creating the first public cord blood bank by Stephen Sprague, a patient who was transplanted with a unit from this bank. John Wagner, M.D., was recognized for performing the first double cord blood transplantation by the recipient Jill Anderson.

The recognition of these doctors was one of the first events of the two-day symposium held in Los Angeles. More than 500 doctors and researchers from more than 30 countries around the world discussed recent achievements and discoveries in the field.

Dr. Gluckman said, "When we think that now it has treated so many people, we know it is something important that we need to have available for everybody."

For a summary of current facts about umbilical cord blood transplantation, visit www.cordbloodforum.org.