

The Abraham J. & Phyllis Katz Cord Blood Foundation



**Cleveland Cord Blood
CENTER**

Save a Cord. Save a Life.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Betty Weibel or Joyce Penhallurick
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CLEVELAND CORD BLOOD CENTER LAUNCHES LIFESAVING PROGRAM *Boosts Northeast Ohio's Bio Technology Community*

CLEVELAND, Ohio – March 11, 2008 – The Abraham J. & Phyllis Katz Cord Blood Foundation and its new Cleveland Cord Blood Center (CCBC), which started collecting umbilical cord blood in January 2008, offers Ohioans enhanced access to the precious cord blood stem cells that have become lifesavers for thousands of individuals with leukemia and other blood-borne diseases around the globe.

With cord blood collections now underway, new mothers delivering at Hillcrest Hospital have the option of donating their otherwise discarded babies' umbilical cord blood. As a public cord blood bank, the blood is collected and stored at no charge to the mother. The stored cord blood stem cells are available to those seeking a suitable stem cell match for treatment.

"Cord blood stem cells are virtually inexhaustible, easily obtainable and are less costly than stem cells obtained from bone marrow sources," explained CCBC Founder and Medical Director Mary Laughlin MD. "The good news is that cord blood stem cells are not only rising to the forefront as a preferred treatment of blood-borne diseases such as leukemia, but they also hold the promise of regenerative therapies for diseases ranging from heart disease to diabetes."

Non-controversial

Because cord blood stem cells would otherwise be discarded after the birth of full-term, normal babies, they are not affected by the ethical and political concerns surrounding the use of human embryonic stem cells.

Dr. Laughlin, who performed one of the world's first successful umbilical cord blood stem cell transplants on an adult leukemia patient in 1993, is determined to ensure that the center's stored umbilical cord blood would be reflective of its diverse population.

Reflecting the Diverse, Uniquely Ohio Population

"We are dedicated to ensuring that the umbilical cord blood we collect will help serve the wide cross-section of ethnicity represented in Northeastern Ohio and throughout the state," Dr. Laughlin said. "There are definite advantages of having a cord blood collection and distribution center located in the heart of our community. The various ethnic populations represented in our area share commonalities that are not necessarily as evident in other areas of the country. The collection and storage of cord blood from those who share common heritages help enhance the chance that a suitable stem cell match can be located."

The Cleveland Cord Blood Center's focus on serving a more diverse population holds particular promise for the area's Hispanic, Asian and African-American populations which have been previously underrepresented in national adult registries.

In addition, the CCBC joins a national network of storage facilities aimed at increasing the supply of stem cell-rich cord blood.

The Abraham J. & Phyllis Katz Cord Blood Foundation is a not-for-profit organization composed of three distinct areas of focus: the CCBC; the Goodman Leukemia Research Institute; and the Cleveland Look Forward Program.

The Cleveland Cord Blood Bank

CCBC was established to meet Ohio's unmet need for umbilical cord blood-derived stem cells for use in both transplants and research. Hillcrest Hospital, the first collection site, will soon be joined by Fairview Hospital. Discussions with other major birthing centers in Northeast Ohio and throughout the state are underway.

Following the delivery of a full-term newborn and collection of cord blood, a CCBC nurse collection coordinator at each hospital ensures that the cord blood is safely transported to the CCBC's 4,000 square-foot clinical facility in Warrensville Heights. At CCBC's clinical laboratory, the cord blood is assessed, tissue typed and frozen in a liquid nitrogen cryopreservation system at a temperature of 320 degrees below zero. The cord blood units are then listed in a national registry which can be accessed by transplant centers around the world looking for an appropriate match for patients.

The Northeast Ohio cord blood center is expected to add 20 biomedical jobs and enhance the region's ability to provide patients with suitable matched stem cells for treatment.

The Goodman Leukemia Research Institute

In conjunction with the work of CCBC, the Goodman Leukemia Research Institute will support new research investigators in established laboratories who focus on the diagnosis and treatment of leukemia. The ultimate goal is to increase success in the treatment of leukemia patients, including, if necessary, the transplantation of lifesaving cord blood-derived stem cells.

The Cleveland Look Forward Program

Mothers who donate their babies' umbilical cord blood will be invited to participate in The Cleveland Look Forward Program. This important program will collect medical information that will contribute to lifesaving research.

Over the course of the first five years following a baby's birth and cord blood donation, mothers will be invited to take part in a short telephone interview to obtain follow-up information about the donating mothers' and their infants' health. Incidence of autism, leukemia, diabetes, and cancer in donating infants, as well as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes in the donating mothers will be obtained.

Using state-of-the-art research technology, the secure information will be used in studies designed to identify mothers and infants at-risk of disease, as well as to use that knowledge to develop possible interventions or diagnose the disease early before their clinical symptoms arise.

The Cleveland Cord Blood Center (CCBC) collects, preserves and stores the umbilical cord blood of Northeast Ohio's diverse population; supports advanced research in maternal-child health; and offers education and training programs for those served. Located in Warrensville Heights, Ohio, CCBC is a public, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, supported by generous gifts from the Abraham J. and Phyllis Katz Foundation, and the Dr. Donald J. and Ruth Weber Goodman Philanthropic Fund. For more information, visit www.clevelandcordblood.org or call 1-866-922-3668.

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FOUNDER AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR MARY J. LAUGHLIN, MD

Pioneer, Global Leader in Cord Blood Stem Cell Transplants

CLEVELAND, Ohio – March 11, 2008 – Dr. Mary Laughlin's position as the Founder and Medical Director of the Abraham J. & Phyllis Katz Cord Blood Foundation and the Cleveland Cord Blood Center (CCBC) in 2007 is the latest role she has assumed in a medical career spanning 18 years that has led her to the forefront of cord blood stem cell research and groundbreaking leukemia treatments. She is a world-class expert dedicated to helping discover cures for some of the most challenging diseases.

Taking the Lead

A global leader in cord blood transplant and research, Dr. Laughlin performed one of the world's first successful umbilical cord blood transplants in an adult leukemia patient in 1993. She has performed more than 150 cord blood stem cell transplants to date.

Today, she is one of world's foremost experts in the area of cord blood stem cell transplants and research. In June, she will assume the position of President of the International Society of Cellular Therapy, a professional society of 1,300 physicians and researchers comprising the global forum and resource for developing and supporting innovative cellular therapies.

Professor, Researcher

In addition to her work with the Cleveland Cord Blood Center, Dr. Laughlin is Associate Professor of Medicine and Pathology at Case Western Reserve University/Case Comprehensive Cancer Center in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1998, she was recruited to join the faculty at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine as well as establish a new clinical and laboratory research program in allogeneic hematopoiesis and immunobiology. Previously she was Assistant Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics at Duke University in North Carolina.

In 1996, Dr. Laughlin co-authored with her colleagues at Duke University her first publication in the *New England Journal of Medicine* describing transplant outcomes in children with leukemia. Next, in 2001, she published as first author a second manuscript in the *New England Journal of Medicine* addressing stem cell transplant outcomes in adult leukemia patients. In 2004, her third manuscript in this prestigious publication directly compared umbilical cord blood as a new stem cell source with conventional bone marrow grafts in adult leukemia patients. In addition, Dr. Laughlin and her co-investigators have published more than 40 papers in the field of leukemia and stem cell transplantation.

Awards & Affiliations

In addition to serving as President Elect of the International Society of Cellular Therapy (ISCT), she is also an elected member of the American Society of Hematology, the International Society for Stem Cell Research, the American Association of Blood Banks, the American Society of Blood and Marrow Transplantation, the American Association of Immunologists, and serves as advisor for additional associations and committees including the FDA and NIH.

Dr. Laughlin has received numerous awards including: the Dr. Donald and Ruth Weber Goodman Professorship Chair in Innovative Cancer Therapeutics in 2006; the John J. Kelley Award in 2002 and was the first Stephen Birnbaum Translational Research Investigator -- both awarded by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America (LLSA) in 1998, as well as being named a Clinical Scholar by the LLSA in recognition of her contributions in the field of leukemia.

Education

A native of Kenmore, New York, Dr. Laughlin received her medical degree *cum laude* at State University of New York at Buffalo as an accelerated student, completing medical school in three years. While a medical student, she published her initial first author manuscript in *Blood* describing the pathophysiology underlying marrow fibrosis in hairy cell leukemia patients. She completed her Internal Medicine Residency and Hematology/Oncology Fellowship training at Duke University with a 24-month fellowship rotation studying allogeneic stem cell transplantation at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

Dr. Laughlin resides in Shaker Heights, Ohio, with her husband and twin children.

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THREE LEUKEMIA SURVIVORS SAY CORD BLOOD SAVED THEIR LIVES

CLEVELAND, Ohio – March 11, 2008 – Gayle Serls, Sophie Avery and Brad Harden share a special bond with three preteen children somewhere out in the world. When the children were born, their parents chose to donate their umbilical cord blood instead of allowing it to be thrown away, as it typically is in delivery rooms.

Serls, Avery and Harden, who were each diagnosed with aggressive forms of leukemia, are alive today thanks to those donations – and to Dr. Mary Laughlin's research on cord blood transplants.

Dr. Laughlin, who is among the world's foremost experts in cord blood stem-cell transplants, is working to ensure that more people have access to the potentially lifesaving treatment. In January 2008, the Cleveland Cord Blood Center began to collect, store and distribute stem-cell-rich umbilical cord blood for the treatment of deadly blood cancers and for research into other life-threatening illnesses. Each year, 44,000 people – 90 percent of them adults – are diagnosed with leukemia. Unlike the controversy that has swirled around research on and the use of embryonic stem cells, stem cells harvested from umbilical cord blood come without controversy. These cells otherwise would be discarded and cord blood collection poses no harm to the baby.

Sophie Avery

Despite years working as a licensed practical nurse at hospitals in Warren, Ohio, Sophie Avery had missed warning signs: Her fatigue she attributed to working too much. She didn't call the doctor until the pin-dot bruising caused by the pressure of her socks had spread up her legs. Lab results revealed that she had a platelet count of 6,000 – about 144,000 less than normal.

Avery, who had just turned 47, spent seven weeks in the hospital, undergoing bone marrow biopsies and chemotherapy and dealing with the vomiting, hair loss and other sicknesses caused by the treatment. By the end of January, her leukemia was in remission and she was well enough to go home.

Fourteen months later, the cancer was back. More chemo, another remission, and then another relapse in March 2000.

Because of her background in nursing, Avery understood that the treatment she faced was daunting. She put her faith in Dr. Laughlin – and in the lifesaving potential of cord blood stem cells.

On September 27, 2000, after weeks of treatment that purposely eradicated her immune system and left her vulnerable to pneumonia and other infections, Avery was injected with lifesaving cells from an unknown Italian-born baby boy, whom she affectionately began referring to as “Guido.” Then it became a waiting game, to see whether Guido’s stem cells would take as their purpose going to work on her leukemia. Within two weeks, she began engrafting new cells. The treatment was working. She went home the next month and began the long process of recovery. Avery has been cancer-free ever since.

In September, she tells people, she’ll turn 8 years old. “I have a new birthday – September 27. I always tell people that it’s my second birthday.” And somewhere out in the world, there’s an 8-year-old boy and his family who saved her life, simply by donating what so many others discard.

Brad Harden

Brad Harden, of Cleveland, was a strong, healthy 22-year-old in 1997. A dedicated weightlifter, he could bench press more than 300 pounds. When he developed a fever, aches, weakness and fatigue, he assumed he had caught a summertime cold or flu. When he finally went to the doctor, blood tests revealed acute myelogenous leukemia.

Chemotherapy and radiation were able to force his cancer into remission, but not for long. Within six months, the leukemia was back. Over the next two years, he would have several more treatments, but after each one, the leukemia would come back even more quickly. Doctors at Ohio State University Medical Center told Harden his only hope would be a bone marrow transplant.

Serls, Harden and Avery were all placed on the nationwide bone marrow transplant list. Their family members were tested as potential donors, but no one was a close enough match. Harden, who is African-American, faced even more challenging odds. African-American patients in need of a bone marrow transplant tend to be more difficult to match, and the number of African-Americans who register as potential bone marrow donors is relatively small.

Harden’s experience inspired his sister, Nicole. When her daughter, Jada, was born in January, Nicole donated the umbilical cord blood instead of allowing it to be thrown away. In addition to helping to treat other cancer patients like her brother, Nicole has seen articles about how stem cells may be able to cure other diseases, as well. “There’s no doubt that without a cord blood transplant I wouldn’t be here today,” Harden says. “That’s why I don’t understand why more mothers don’t do it.”

Gayle Serls

Gayle Serls was one of the first adults to receive a cord blood transplant. As of May 1, 2008, it will be 12 years since tiny umbilical cord stem cells went to work against her leukemia. “I have no doubt that I would not be here,” Serls says. “The treatment saved my life.”

On August 7, 1995, doctors at Duke University Hospital told her the bad news: acute lymphocytic leukemia. And then even worse news: Serls had Philadelphia chromosome, a condition that made long-term remission unlikely. "The only thing that would save me was a transplant. I needed a whole new immune system," she says.

Serls received the infusion of cells on May 1, 1996. By the middle of June, she was able to go home. After another month, she was off all medication. Over the years since the lifesaving procedure, Serls says doctors have searched for the Philadelphia chromosome that had been her death sentence. They have not found it.

Over the past 12 years, Serls has gotten to see her two children grow into adulthood, seen her son get married, and is eagerly anticipating the birth of her first grandchild, due in late September. "The longer you can look back, the more precious it becomes, the more excited you are about living," she says.

Knowing that she is alive today because she received a cord blood transplant, Serls now works as a staff assistant at the Carolinas Cord Blood Bank in Durham, NC. She believes fervently that more knowledge of and access to this potentially lifesaving treatment is necessary. Serls says the donation procedure is easy for mothers. All parents have to do is sign a consent form, and they even have the opportunity to withdraw their consent if they change their minds, she says. She hopes to encourage her son and daughter-in-law to donate the umbilical cord blood when their child is born later this year.

Chance brought all three to Dr. Laughlin. Serl's mother saw a story on the evening news about the doctor's promising research on using cord blood transplants to treat children diagnosed with leukemia. Harden's friend read an article on the Internet; Avery's doctor heard Dr. Laughlin speak at a conference.

Now that the Cleveland Cord Blood Center has begun collecting in Northeast Ohio, expectant mothers will have the opportunity to save another's life.

The Cleveland Cord Blood Center (CCBC) collects, preserves and stores umbilical cord blood of Northeast Ohio's diverse population; supports advanced research in maternal-child health; and offers education and training programs for those served. Located in Warrensville Heights, Ohio, CCBC is a public, not-for-profit 501(c)(3), supported by generous gifts from the Abraham J. and Phyllis Katz Foundation, and the Dr. Donald J. and Ruth Weber Goodman Philanthropic Fund. For more information, visit www.clevelandcordblood.org or call 1-866-922-3668.

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Fact Sheet

What is the Cleveland Cord Blood Center (CCBC)?

The CCBC's primary purpose is to collect, store and distribute stem cell-rich umbilical cord blood, that is usually discarded at birth, for the treatment of deadly blood cancers and other life-threatening illnesses, and medical research.

Location

25001 Emery Road, Suite 150
Cleveland, Ohio 44128

What are cord blood stem cells?

Cord blood-derived stem cells are a new source of blood cell-forming (hematopoietic) stem cells with the potential for many medical treatments. These stem cells are collected after delivery from umbilical cords and placentas of full-term, normal babies.

Controversy-free

Because cord blood stem cells would otherwise be discarded after the birth of full-term, normal babies, they are not affected by the ethical and political concerns surrounding the use of human embryonic stem cells.

How to donate

Currently at Hillcrest Hospital in Cleveland, expectant mothers can complete appropriate paperwork to indicate voluntary donation consent. After the baby is born, the cord blood is collected by the doctor, during the delivery of the afterbirth. A CCBC nurse collection coordinator ensures that the cord blood is safely transported to the Center. The baby's cord blood is ultimately stored and readied for its intended lifesaving work at some time in the future. Fairview Hospital will begin collections spring 2008. Additional Ohio hospitals will be added in the future.

How are cord blood stem cells used?

Thousands of cord blood stem cell transplants are performed worldwide each year, such as those used in the treatment of leukemia. Researchers are also seeking new, regenerative medicine therapies for other diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, autoimmune deficiency diseases and more.

About Founder and Medical Director Mary Laughlin MD

In 1993, Dr. Mary Laughlin performed one of the world's first successful umbilical cord blood transplants in an adult leukemia patient. Today, Dr. Laughlin is one of the world's foremost experts in the area of cord blood stem cell transplants and research.

She will assume the position of President of the International Society of Cellular Therapy in June 2008 and currently serves as FDA and NIH advisor.

Serving Ohio's unmet need

The CCBC was established to meet Ohio's need for umbilical cord blood-derived stem cells for use in both transplants and research. CCBC-collected cord blood reflects the area's ethnically diverse population.

Current discussions are underway with hospitals located in other regions of the state.

The Cleveland Look Forward Program

Mothers who donate their babies' umbilical cord blood will be invited to participate in The Cleveland Look Forward Program in which information will be collected about the donating mothers and their infants' health. The information will be used in research designed to identify individuals at risk of disease, to develop possible interventions or preempt the diseases before their clinical diagnosis.

Research

In conjunction with the work of CCBC, the Goodman Leukemia Research Institute will support new research investigators in established laboratories, focusing on the diagnosis and treatment of leukemia.

How is CCBC funded?

The Abraham J. and Phyllis Katz Cord Blood Foundation (dba Cleveland Cord Blood Center), was established by a generous philanthropic grant made by Abraham Katz through the Abraham J. and Phyllis Katz Foundation to establish CCBC, with an additional planned gift through the Dr. Donald J. and Ruth Weber Goodman Philanthropic Fund. Private and public funding is sought to help support the center's cord blood bank, research activities and operations.

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