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“What Every Mama Needs To Know About Cord Blood Banking”

Pre-Mother’s Day Awareness Campaign Educates Expectant Families on Life-Saving Benefits of Placental Stem Cell and Cord Blood Banking

Lisa Valastro, Wife of TLC’s “Cake Boss” Joins Effort

CEDAR KNOLLS, NJ, and TUCSON, AZ , April 17, 2012 – This Mother’s Day, expectant moms will receive a dose of advice from an unlikely source. Lisa Valastro, wife of TLC’s “Cake Boss,” a mother of four and a cord blood banking advocate, is partnering with a national cord blood bank and a not-for-profit organization to help propel more parents to fully consider the option of saving their newborn’s cord blood stem cells. Buddy Valastro might be known for his famous cakes, but Lisa has her own recipe for protecting her children’s health.

“Stem cells are like nature’s repair kit for the body,” explains Valastro. “Buddy and I could never live with ourselves if we didn’t preserve something as valuable as our children’s cord blood stem cells. We need to help other families understand their value, too.”

Valastro, who was surprised to learn that only 5 percent of expectant parents chose to save their newborn’s cord blood stem cells, is teaming up with LifebankUSA®, the cord blood bank she selected for preserving her children’s stem cells, and the Save the Cord Foundation. The hope is that together they will ignite dialogue and help more parents make informed decisions.

The centerpiece of the effort is a 60-minute online “mama-logue” to be hosted by Valastro and featuring medical leaders in the field of cord blood banking. Called *“What Every Mama Needs To Know About Cord Blood Banking,”* the webinar will take place on **Friday, May 11 from 11 a.m. – noon (eastern)** and coincides with New Jersey’s Bone Marrow and Umbilical Cord Blood Donation Awareness Month (May).

Cord blood banking is a medical investment that could save the life of a child or their close blood relatives. Stem cell transplants have already become the standard of care for as many as 80 life-threatening blood disorders. In the future, these cells may prove beneficial in an emerging field called regenerative medicine*, which involves rebuilding or replacing damaged tissues and organs and restoring their critical functions.^{1,2} Scientists are exploring regenerative medicine for a wide range of debilitating diseases^{1,2} including stroke,^{1,2} Parkinson’s disease^{1,2} and type 1 diabetes,^{1,2} to name a few.

“Pregnancy is an exciting, but daunting time. There’s so much going on. Deciding to preserve your newborn’s cells is one decision that cannot be delayed because once your child is born and the umbilical cord is discarded, these invaluable cells are lost forever,” said Valastro. “I really hope moms everywhere will join us for our online ‘mama-logue’ and get the facts.”

MORE

Joining Valastro for “[What Every Mama Needs To Know About Cord Blood Banking](#),” will be Daria Klachko, MD, FACOG, of Saint Barnabas Hospital and Short Hills Surgery Center and Charis Ober, founder of Save the Cord Foundation. Participants will learn:

- Why Valastro and her husband Buddy decided to family bank their children’s cord blood cells
- The current life-saving uses of cord blood and placenta blood cells and the reasons to believe these stem cells might change medical treatment in the future
- How a 9-year old boy made history -- and is alive today -- because of a stem cell transplant
- Criteria to use in selecting a family cord blood bank and options for public donation
- Answers to your questions that will help you make informed decisions

“The need for education is crystal clear,” said Charis Ober, founder of Save the Cord Foundation. “Stem cells are the building blocks of our bodies. With 95 percent of umbilical cords being discarded, we are literally wasting a natural resource that has tremendous value to us now and in the future. We need to help parents understand why it is so important to save their infants’ cord blood!”

This sentiment was echoed in a report issued in October, 2011 by the Government Accountability Office describing high quality US cord blood collections as low and off the targeted goals by 30 percent³.

Families have two options when it comes to preserving their newborn’s stem cells. Family banking means storing with a company that will freeze and protect the cells for years to come. There is a cost for this service, as it is the only way to ensure that your family will have access to your child’s cells. Public donation means the cells are donated very much like a unit of blood. Donated stem cells are used for research or placed on a public registry for people in need. For a complete list of options, families are encouraged to visit the Save the Cord Foundation web site at savethecordfoundation.org.

“I know many parents who didn’t bank and wish they had but I do not know one parent who chose to bank and wishes they hadn’t,” explained Robert Hariri, MD, Ph.D., CEO and Founder of LifebankUSA. “The truth is the science is evolving every day. Stem cells are already being used to replace other cells in the body that are abnormal or have been destroyed by disease. Though we are still in the investigational stage, I personally believe regenerative medicine can offer extraordinary medical possibilities for patients in a range of diseases.”

Hariri is a biomedical visionary who pioneered the technology to preserve stem cells derived from the placenta, making his company **the only one registered with the FDA** to collect stem cells from both sources of stem cell-rich blood: the umbilical cord and placenta. This ability to recover more cells at birth could translate into greater medicinal success and survival^{4,5,6} and means more cells could be available for regenerative medicine^{7,8}, advancing transformational opportunities for patients in the future.

To participate in “[What Every Mama Needs To Know About Cord Blood Banking](#)” please sign up today at cordbloodmamalogue.webex.com. Space is limited.

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“What Every Mama Needs To Know About Cord Blood Banking” is supported by LifebankUSA.

ABOUT LIFEBANKUSA

As the only company that offers cord blood, placenta blood and tissue banking -- and the first to release placenta-derived stem cells for a successful transplant -- New Jersey-based LifebankUSA is a technological leader that is pioneering key medical innovations in the field. Owned by the Celgene Corporation, a world-class biopharmaceutical company, LifebankUSA also operates a robust donation program and collects cells from anywhere in the US for use primarily in advancing medical research.

ABOUT SAVE THE CORD FOUNDATION

A nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, Save the Cord Foundation was established to create and provide educational awareness and to distribute unbiased, factual information concerning the life-saving benefits of cord blood and the need to preserve this valuable natural resource.

References

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 - ³ US Government Accountability Office. National Cord Blood Inventory: Practices for Increasing Availability for Transplants and Related Challenges. <http://gao.gov/products/GAO-12-23>. Accessed March 2, 2012.
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 - ⁷ Harris DT, Badowski M, Ahmad N, Gaballa MA. The potential of cord blood stem cells for use in regenerative medicine. *Expert Opin Biol Ther.* 2007;7(9):1311-1322.
 - ⁸ US Department of Health and Human Services. 2020: a new vision – a future for regenerative medicine. <http://www.hhs.gov/reference/newfuture.shtml>. Accessed March 2, 2012.
 - ⁹ Nietfeld JJ, Pasquini MC, Logan BR, et al. Lifetime probabilities of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in the U. S. *Biol Blood marrow Transplant.* 2008; 14 (3):316-322.
- * Cord blood and placenta blood-derived stem cells banked with LifebankUSA are indicated for hematopoietic reconstitution (the reformation of blood cellular components) for autologous use or use in first or second degree blood relatives. Any use of cord and placental blood stem cells other than for hematopoietic reconstitution is considered investigational, including regenerative medicine therapies. The chance that a child will use his/her own stored stem cells during his/her lifetime for currently treated conditions is estimated at 1 in 400.⁹