

Education on Umbilical Cord Blood Donation for African-American and Hispanic Families

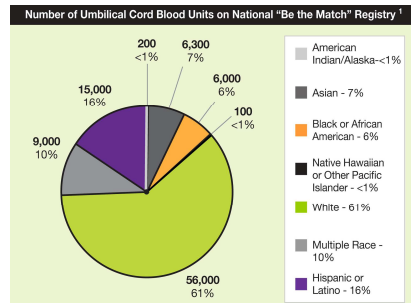
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Barriers to Donation

"What would prevent me from donating is not knowing about it. Not knowing... How can you donate it, if they don't tell you about it or inform you..." ~ Pregnant Mom, Focus Group Participant, 2009

A lack of comprehensive educational materials and a designated educator at most prenatal facilities in communities of color stands in the way of increasing umbilical cord blood donations by pregnant Hispanic and non-Hispanic black women. Birthing families have the power to save lives by donating umbilical cord blood to a public bank – but only if they are fully informed of their donation options and understand the need for their donation.

Donation Disparities



Benefits to Donation

Umbilical cord blood stem cells provide an alternative to adult stem cells found in bone marrow for patients who require a stem cell transplant, and are more easily matched to patients than stem cells from an unrelated adult donor.² An umbilical stem cell tissue match is more likely if the donor and recipient have similar tissue types, which are inherited and influenced by racial and ethnic background.³ In order to ensure that patients from all racial and ethnic backgrounds can find a match, donation by racial and ethnic minorities must be increased from current donation levels.

"I cherish every single day and give deep heartfelt thanks to the anonymous cord donor. Simply donating their baby's umbilical cord gave another child, my son, 'life!'"

~ Cassandra Colyer,

Mother of Cord Blood Transplant Recipient



Toolkit and Training Program



"I've read a lot of things about cord blood banking and I see it ... all the time. I see posters. But my husband and I still don't really know what it is. We still don't have a clue. But if somebody sat down and told us what you just told us then we would ... it only took you about ten minutes to explain that."

~ Focus Group Participant, 2009

Hypothesis: When pregnant women are given comprehensive education on the need for and process of umbilical cord blood donation, they are more likely to see donation as appropriate for their families and to request a donation kit.

Methods: HealthConnect One, in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago, conducted a series of five focus groups to determine the best messages and best messengers for educating African-American and Hispanic birthing families about their cord blood options. Results were published in *Transfusion* in December 2009.

Research: A pilot study was then conducted at four sites, with 307 pregnant women over a three-month period. This group of predominantly Hispanic and non-Hispanic black women was educated by HealthConnect One-trained community health workers, case managers, prenatal educators, and breastfeeding peer counselors at four (health-center based) sites in the city of Chicago. These educators were chosen because HealthConnect One focus groups identified them as trusted sources for health information.

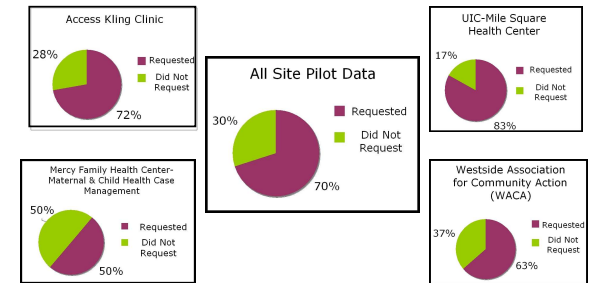
Observation: 70% (215/307) of pilot study participants requested an umbilical cord blood donation kit after their education sessions.

"This is the one time that nobody told them [our clients] they have to do this and that; this is something that they can decide on their own. So many... are happy to help someone else, happy to contribute. So we are happy to be a part of it!"

~ Case Manager, Pilot Site, 2010



Pilot Results



Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

The observations suggest that when pregnant Hispanic and non-Hispanic black women are presented with umbilical cord blood options, the majority of women will request an umbilical cord blood donation kit. These results necessitate additional, replicated studies in other cities and with rural populations of varying socioeconomic statuses in order to confirm the results of this study with a wider population of pregnant women.

Follow-up research from this study has the potential to reveal any systemic barriers between a minority birthing family's request for a collection kit and their completed donation. Research may also explore how effective various methods of education are on umbilical cord blood donation rates in these populations.

¹ National Marrow Donor Program's Be the Match. Accessed Fall 2009. www.bethematch.org

² National Marrow Donor Program, "Cord Blood Transplants." Accessed 7/29/2010. www.marrows.org

³ National Marrow Donor Program, "Cord Blood Donation: Frequently Asked Questions." Accessed 7/29/2010. www.marrows.org