

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Spotlight on cord blood transplant reminds them of a Va Med first

Considerable recent attention has been given to the use of umbilical cord blood for bone marrow transplantation by the medical literature¹ as well as the lay press and television. This letter is written to address the fact that it was the VIRGINIA MEDICAL MONTHLY that published the original article on this usage in 1972² and raised the possibility of umbilical cord blood banks. The clinical work was performed in Petersburg, Virginia, and the laboratory studies in Atlanta, Georgia. The article reported a patient with acute lymphoblastic leukemia who obtained a documented temporary graft following administration of a relatively small quantity of umbilical cord blood matched only for ABO typing.

The use of umbilical cord blood and the potential for cord blood banking has met with considerable resistance. The original publication in 1972 has been largely ignored,^{1,3} and even at Chernobyl it apparently was not considered, fetal liver cells instead being utilized unsuccessfully when bone marrow was not available.⁴ Following Chernobyl, we attempted to revive the concept that umbilical cord blood holds potentially equal or significantly greater capability for marrow transplantation than does human adult blood marrow, as reported in two more recent articles verifying this basic concept.^{5,6}

Twenty years ago no untoward effects were noted in the 17 terminal patients to whom one of us had given umbilical cord blood late in the progress of their malignancies, including the patient with acute lymphoblastic leukemia mentioned above.⁷

When umbilical cord blood banks and the use of cord blood for marrow transplantation come into existence, the future of medical therapy will be signifi-

cantly altered, and the article in this journal 18 years ago will, we believe, have led the way.

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