Three AMH Obstetricians Honored By Cord Blood Bank

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Dr. Joseph Talsky of Alton OB/GYN Associates and the BJC Medical Group of Illinois with the plaque he received from the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank for collecting 101 units of cord blood in 2011

Drs. Talsky, Cannon, Wikoff Collect More Than 100 Units Each in 2011

ALTON, IL – Three Alton Memorial Hospital physicians received Leadership Awards from the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank for collecting 100 or more units of cord blood in 2011.

The honorees were obstetricians Dr. Joseph Talsky, Dr. Sara Cannon and Dr. Catherine Wikoff. New leaders are presented with a perpetual plaque with an engraved plate for 2011. They also received a cake in celebration of their accomplishment.

Dr. Talsky, of the BJC Medical Group of Illinois and OB/GYN Associates of Alton, collected 101 units and banked 37; Dr. Cannon collected 119 units and banked 23; Dr. Wikoff collected 100 units and banked 22.

“It’s something you can do with almost all deliveries, it doesn’t take much time and it’s potentially a lifesaver,” Dr. Talsky said. “The main thing is getting the consent of the family and then taking the time to do it.”

After a baby has been delivered, the umbilical cord, placenta and the blood contained within are usually discarded. With parental consent, the umbilical cord blood now can

be collected and sent to the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank for processing. The collection procedure is painless for mother and baby, and doesn't interfere with the birthing process.

Umbilical cord blood is rich in hematopoietic stem cells like those in bone marrow. Hematopoietic stem cells are the parent cells that create all of a person's blood cells — red cells that carry oxygen, white cells that fight disease and platelets that help blood to clot.

"All three doctors at Alton Memorial have excellent technique, as indicated by their numbers," said Drew Schumacher, outreach coordinator for the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank. "As a result, each of them has had at least one of their banked units chosen for transplantation."

In fact, cord blood from Dr. Talsky's deliveries has resulted in 13 lives saved, while the blood bank has also credited Dr. Wikoff with four saves and Dr. Cannon with one.

The stem cells from the cord blood can be transplanted and used to treat more than 70 diseases, including leukemia, lymphoma and sickle cell anemia. Children and adults diagnosed with metabolic disorders such as immune deficiencies and bone marrow failure also may require a stem cell transplant to replenish cells that are abnormal or destroyed due to therapy.

"The St. Louis Cord Blood Bank is a public bank," Schumacher said. "This means that we accept donations of cord blood from expectant families at no cost to them. If a cord blood unit qualifies to be banked, it is stored in liquid nitrogen until it is needed. Characteristics of the cord blood unit are listed on worldwide registries where transplant physicians search for units that match their patients' needs.

Schumacher said the blood bank makes sure the collected cord blood units are safe and effective for use with an unrelated recipient. This requires that an extensive medical questionnaire be completed and that the blood is tested for infectious diseases. Additionally, cord units must contain a minimum of 2 ounces of blood, and they must contain a billion cells or more.

"Ours is a community-based program," Schumacher said. "The doctors, certified nurse midwives, nurses and hospitals who participate in our program donate their time and efforts. It is their generosity and dedication to the program that has made the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank one of the leading public cord blood banks in the world. More importantly, because of these caring people, more than 2,000 children and adults are alive today."

Established in 1995, the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank is one of the largest and most active independent public cord blood banks in the world. It has provided more than 2,030 stem cell products to adults and children at transplant centers around the globe.

Dr. Catherine Wikoff Dr. Sara Cannon