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## *Rose blooms* Personal side of public cord banking

One reason I am passionate about the benefits of public cord banking is that I owe my daughter's life to a public cord bank.

At the age of 2 months, my first child, Rose, was diagnosed with aplastic anemia. A stem cell transplant was our only hope of saving her life. My wife and I debated the pros and cons of unrelated cord vs. unrelated adult marrow (or peripheral blood stem cells). Further complicating the process was Rose's mixed ethnicity: My wife is Irish and I'm Mexican. It would not be easy finding a human leukocyte antigen match for Rose.

At the time of her transplant in 1997, only about 100 infant cord transplants had been done in the world. We consulted several transplant centers and visited a few of them. Fortunately, the center we chose, Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, had done several, and the transplant director, Morris Kletzel, M.D., was very experienced.

We were ecstatic the day a donor cord unit was identified at the New York Blood Center (NYBC), the world's oldest public cord blood bank. NYBC receives donations from a diverse population, so it was able to find a match for our ethnically mixed child.



Rose Rucoba, who received a stem cell transplant at 9 months of age, is now a thriving 13-year-old. The donor cord unit for her transplant came from a public cord blood bank in New York.

newborn's cord blood, I quote the statistics and the official recommendations. In the interest of full disclosure, I tell them Rose's success story. The odds are small that their child will benefit from his or her own cord blood, but my daughter is an example of how donating a child's cord blood to a public bank could save someone else's life.

— *Ruben J. Rucoba, M.D., FAAP*

Rose was in the hospital for a month, most of it spent in isolation while her cells engrafted. My wife and I alternated nights with Rose. The process was stressful and exhausting, but the outcome was miraculous, as Rose engrafted and did well.

There have been setbacks along the way, but Rose is now 13. She is full of life and enjoys acting, singing, texting, reading, laughing and occasionally rolling her eyes at her parents. In other words, she's a typical teenager.

My wife and I often think of the anonymous parents who donated their baby's placenta so our Rose could blossom.

So when expectant parents ask me in my office if they should privately bank their