

LifeCell introduces genetic testing for cord blood samples

11 April 2019 | News | By Prapti Shah

LifeCell becomes first cord blood bank in the world to screen for Inherited Diseases and Pediatric Cancers



LifeCell International, India's first and largest community stem cell bank, has announced its next milestone - initiation of genetic testing on all cord blood samples before they are released for use. This will make LifeCell the world's first cord blood bank to add a significant layer of safety to ensure that cord blood stem cells released for transplants do not carry genetic abnormalities and are safe (conditions apply) for use in patients.

Human Umbilical Cord blood is one of the preferred sources of stem cells. Its advantages are ease of collection at birth, rapid availability in case of need (not dependent on donor variables), can be preserved for decades, and can be combined with other sources of hematopoietic stem cells to hasten engraftment and improve overall benefit.

As India's largest stem cell community stem cell bank, LifeCell currently has an inventory of more than 32,000 units, which is growing by double digits each year. Access to such an inventory provides the community of families (those who have preserved their babies stem cells with LifeCell) more than 96% probability of finding matching stem cells for their loved ones - in case the need of hematopoietic transplantation arises.

LifeCell has introduced these genomic profiling tests using cutting-edge next-generation sequencing (NGS) techniques. These newly introduced genomic tests will screen for approximately 7,000 inherited diseases and markers of childhood cancers. By screening specifically for genes known to be responsible for inherited diseases and cancer panels screening for childhood cancers, the results will be specific and robust in protecting patient safety.

Dr Purvish Parikh, Professor of Medical Oncology and Group Oncology Director, Shalby Cancer and Research Institute, Shalby Group of Hospitals says, "Introduction of these tests would provide doctors and families of patients additional assurance regarding the quality of the cryopreserved cord blood stem cell that can be utilized for hematopoietic transplant. If the cord blood unit to be used is free from the risk of carrying cancers or inherited diseases, it is a big advantage."

Ishaan Khanna, CEO, BioBank & Diagnostics Divisions, LifeCell International said, "LifeCell has always been leading the

industry with new initiatives and this is one another in the interest of patient safety. These additional tests being introduced by LifeCell as part of its release criteria are entirely voluntary as they're not yet mandated by regulatory agencies. However, they are in line with the advancements in the field of genomics and are anticipated to soon become a part of the standard recommendations".

LifeCell, established in 2004, is India's leading provider of preventive healthcare services for mother and baby wellness and healthcare solutions such as stem cell banking and diagnostic services. With facilities at Chennai and Gurugram and a network spanning over 200 cities in India and abroad, over 3,75,000 parents have trusted LifeCell for its services.

LifeCell's umbilical cord blood stem cell banking, a community-based approach towards stem cell access, is a global first initiative that aims to provide families in India better future access to stem cells than even currently possible in advanced countries such as the US.

As a comprehensive provider of preventive and diagnostic healthcare services, LifeCell presents a complete panel of pre and post-natal diagnostic tests including maternal infectious diseases test, prenatal screening and newborn screening. Through these services, LifeCell aims to provide complete wellness for the mother and baby ensuring healthy pregnancy and healthy newborns.