

Unlicensed cord blood transplants can help people of color

Umbilical cord blood is safe, effective treatment for many diseases

The largest study of its kind found that unlicensed umbilical cord blood is safe and effective for umbilical cord blood transplant (UCBT).

UCBT can cure leukemia, lymphoma, sickle cell disease and other illnesses. Unfortunately, people of color may have difficulty finding a closely matched adult blood or marrow donor. Another option is umbilical cord blood, which has less restrictive match requirements.

However, U.S. law requires that cord blood banks get licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Licensing is a long, costly process. Also, most cord blood that was collected and stored before 2011 does not meet licensing rules. As a result, only 1 in 10 cord blood units stored in the U.S. is licensed. Most cord blood is unlicensed.

Researchers wanted to find out if unlicensed cord blood is safe and effective for treatment of many diseases. They checked the medical records of 2,500 people who got unlicensed cord blood transplants in the U.S. from 2011-2016.

Researchers found that, on average, people who got unlicensed cord blood had good outcomes.

The study included people with diverse ancestry. About one-third of the adults and half of the children in the study were people of color. They identified as:

- black or African American,
- Asian,
- Pacific Islander,
- American Indian or Alaska Native,
- multiple races,
- and/or Hispanic ethnicity.

Unlicensed umbilical cord blood expands access to transplant to patients with diverse ancestry.

Ask your doctor

- How can I find a donor for my BMT?
- What are the risks and possible benefits of cord blood?



Learn more about

- [Cord blood and transplants](#) from BeTheMatch.org
- [Clinical trials of cord blood](#) at JCCTP.org
- More [study summaries](#) at cibmtr.org

About this research summary

This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of the CIBMTR® (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research®).

Source

Ballen K, Logan BR, Chitphakdithai P, et al. [Unlicensed Umbilical Cord Blood Units Provide a Safe and Effective Graft Source for a Diverse Population: A Study of 2456 Umbilical Cord Blood Recipients](#). Biol Blood Marrow Transplant. 2019. Epub 2019/11/23. doi: 10.1016/j.bbmt.2019.11.016.

