

RCOG/RCM statement on umbilical cord blood collection and banking

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and Royal College of Midwives (RCM) reiterate the belief that there is not enough evidence at present to recommend routine private cord blood collection and banking unless there is a medically-indicated reason^{1,2}.

The RCOG and RCM support the Human Tissue Authority's (HTA) Licensing Framework and Quality & Safety Regulations which include the arrangements for the collection and storage of cord blood. This means, only individuals who are licensed by the HTA can collect cord blood in a designated area away from the delivery room; this will ensure that national standards are followed in line with the RCOG and RCM recommendations which state that cord blood collection is undertaken by a skilled technician after the placenta has been delivered.

The RCOG and RCM support medically directed and altruistic cord blood collection for public banking in the UK. This refers to cord blood that is collected, donated and stored in an NHS Cord Blood Bank or Anthony Nolan facility³.

The UK Stem Cell Strategic Forum reported in 2010 that the UK needs 50,000 cord blood units to meet the transplant demand in the UK. It is recognised that stem cell transplantation is a potentially life-saving treatment option for children and adults with blood cancers. NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) together with Anthony Nolan, will be increasing collection in their centres around the UK to reach this target.

The RCOG and RCM support the recommendations from the UK Stem Cell Strategic Forum and welcome the funding for an increase in the UK cord blood inventory.

It is vital that the obstetrician or midwife are not distracted from the immediate care of the mother and baby during the third stage of labour; and the management of the third stage is not altered or compromised. There is also the issue of the timing of the clamping of the cord as this will have an effect on the collection of cord blood. Evidence suggests that immediate cord clamping in preterm babies may be harmful to them. In healthy newborns, deferred clamping may enhance placental transfusion and reduces jaundice and low iron stores at birth⁴. Both the RCOG and RCM strongly believe that interference with the third stage of labour needs to be kept at a minimum to ensure good outcome for both mother and baby.

Parents wishing to collect and store their own cord blood privately have good advice on what is permissible and lawful from the HTA⁵. In addition, they must ensure that all necessary arrangements for collection of the cord blood are made through the company concerned.

The added benefit to public banking through NHSBT and Anthony Nolan is the testing and processing of blood samples after collection. This ensures that the blood that is collected is of good quality and safe for future use.

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Notes

¹ RCOG Scientific Advisory Committee Opinion Paper 2 [Umbilical Cord Blood Banking](#) (2006)

² RCM Position Statement [Commercial Cord Blood Collection](#) (2011)

³ Currently, there are five NHS Trusts with dedicated staff that collect cord blood for NHSBT. These are: Barnet General Hospital, Northwick Park Hospital, Luton and Dunstable Hospital, Watford General Hospital and St George's Hospital. These cord blood units are stored in a dedicated facility in Filton.

Anthony Nolan collects cord blood at three hospitals: King's College Hospital in London and the Leicester Royal Infirmary and Leicester General Hospital. After collection, the samples are then tested and banked at the Cell Therapy Centre based at Nottingham Trent University.

A recent announcement from the Department of Health in July 2011 about new investment means a further collection site is expected to open at the end of 2011, with the existing sites expanding to offer a 24-hour collection service.

⁴ RCOG Scientific Advisory Committee Opinion Paper 14 [Clamping of the Umbilical Cord and Placental Transfusion](#) (2009)

⁵ See the HTA's [Position statement on cord blood collection](#) (March 2010) and [Guidance for licensed established involved in cord blood collection](#) (March 2010).

For more information about the NHS Cord Blood Bank, click [here](#).

For more information about the Anthony Nolan cord blood programme, click [here](#).