



e-Network Forum

CALIFORNIA BLOOD BANK SOCIETY

"We help save lives of people who need blood"

Search CBBS Website

When is it OK to discard umbilical cord blood stem cells?

A transfusion medicine physician wonders if any colleague has had experience dealing with the disposal of umbilical cord blood stem cells that were collected and stored at a family's request. Apparently the family has fallen into arrears in payment for the product's future storage. The inquiring physician knows that it is not uncommon to discard frozen autologous red cells for non-payment, however to dispose of umbilical cord stem cells is, in her opinion, a different situation, and a much more emotional issue. She is hesitant to throw the stem cells away, only to have the family upset later because their "life-line" was discarded.

The following responses were received.

1. **A colleague with experience in the storage of umbilical cord blood stem cells** reports that the **informed consent** document that the mother/parents sign is the most important place to start. If the consent clearly states that the cord blood will be destroyed if not financially supported, the responding colleague is of the opinion that liability will be better controlled. He adds that in his experience, at least some cord blood companies are holding the autologous product in inventory for a year during which time they contact the mother/family (quarterly) and try to work out payments. After this type of "good faith" effort with several documented contacts, the responding colleague would destroy the product. He cautions that a different approach would be needed if the stem cell donor (i.e., the baby) eventually turns of "legal age".

Editor's NOTE: Please remember that this forum is not intended as a substitute for legal advice and the content should not be relied upon for legal purposes. Readers should make their own determinations as to (i) what constitutes appropriate medical, technical, and administrative practices, and (ii) how best to comply with laws and regulations relevant to their questions. For the latter, they should consider consulting with an attorney familiar with related state and federal laws.

Please submit comments to the [e-Network Forum](#).



Printable PDF of this page

Ira A. Shulman, MD
CBBS e-Network Forum Editor & Moderator

The e-Network Forum is supported by the California Blood Bank Society (CBBS) and endorses collegial discussion among blood banking and transfusion medicine professionals. However, the CBBS does not necessarily endorse the specific views and opinions expressed in the forum. The forum is not intended as a substitute for medical or legal advice and the content should not be relied upon for any medical or legal purposes. Readers should make their own determinations as to: (i) what constitutes appropriate medical, technical, and administrative practices, and (ii) how best to comply with laws and regulations relevant to their questions. For the latter, they should consider consulting, as to any medical matters, a qualified physician, and, as to any legal matters, an attorney familiar with related state and federal laws. The user of the forum, by accessing same, assumes all risks arising out of such use and releases CBBS and their respective members, directors, officers and agents from and against any loss, damage, claim or liability arising out of such use of the forum.

Posted: August 19, 2003

Addenda: