

100th umbilical cord blood unit goes to cancer patient

Star-Advertiser staff

An adult suffering from a rare form of blood cancer recently received the 100th matched unit of umbilical cord blood from the Hawaii Cord Blood Bank, a milestone for the local nonprofit, which has helped patients around the world.

"This remarkable achievement is a great testament to Hawaii's unique program and highlights the rich ethnic diversity of our donors," said Dr. Randal Wada, medical director and founder of the bank, which began as a pilot program in 1998.

Umbilical cord blood, donated by a mother after her baby is delivered, is a rich source of lifesaving stem cells that can help patients with leukemia, lymphoma and other

serious diseases. Normally it is discarded after birth.

"We tell expecting parents that by donating their baby's cord blood, they're recycling these lifesaving stem cells," Wada said. "On the day your baby is born, you have the chance to give the gift of life a second time."

Two pairs of Hawaii units also have been used in "double transplants," where cord blood from two different donors was combined for use in an adult patient.

Cord blood collection is available to mothers delivering at Kapiolani, Queen's, Castle, Kaiser and Tripler hospitals on Oahu and at Maui Memorial Medical Center. To learn more, call 938-2265, toll-free 855-583-3085 from the neighbor islands, or visit www.hcbb.org.