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National Cord Blood Adult Stem Cell Bank

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005, which would establish a national cord blood stem cell bank. This legislation was agreed to last night during wrap-up under unanimous consent.

I would like to congratulate the majority leader and all parties involved in yesterday's achievement, which resulted in passage of the cord blood bill. As you will recall, it was just 2 days ago that the other side, through the junior Senator from Iowa, reaffirmed their objections to consideration of this important legislation.

Their objections, it seems, were not substantive as this legislation has been championed by Members from both sides of the aisle and as further evidenced by the lifting of objections and the cord blood bill passing without any opposition. Passage without any opposition in the Senate is truly rare. Rather, the other side's objections were tied to their support for additional funding of highly controversial destructive human embryonic stem cell research, which despite sufficient funding and years of research has yet to cure--or even treat--one human patient yet.

Clearly, the other side wants a vote on their embryonic stem cell legislation, which requires the destruction of young human lives. On the other hand, I and many of my colleagues would also like for us to have an up-or-down vote on the Human Cloning Prohibition Act or the Human Chimera

Prohibition Act, but we have been denied this by the other side. There will be a time for a vigorous debate on all of these issues next year, and I look forward to engaging in that debate.

However, ethical, noncontroversial cord blood stem cell research should not have been made the political football that it was for the intervening months between House passage of the bill in May and yesterday's action in the Senate. Once again, I would like to commend all of my colleagues for depoliticizing the issue of cord blood. Patients will be benefited almost immediately, and, yes, more kids' lives will be saved because we passed this bill yesterday, rather than sometime next year. I applaud the other side for recognizing this fact.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from Iowa took to the floor and challenged my statement from Thursday evening that "more kids will die if we don't take up the cord blood bill." I would merely like to spend a few minutes highlighting the truth of my statement.

Cord blood stem cell research involves the blood from human umbilical cords. Cord blood contains a high number of pluripotent stem cells; and it is currently treating real people and saving many lives.

Contemplation of cord blood stem cell's therapeutic power is something that many in my office are currently contemplating, as at least five staff members or their spouses are expecting babies right

now. We even thought that one of them was coming a few nights ago, but it was a false alarm.

Unlike human embryonic stem cells, which require the destruction of young human beings, umbilical cord blood stem cells are completely ethical as their derivation and use results in no harm to any human beings. Cord blood has incredible therapeutic power.

To better harness the power of cord blood, thereby saving more lives, the cord blood bill that passed last night was essential. While I had worked closely with Senator Specter in channeling appropriation funds to establish a national cord blood stem cell bank, without the authorizing legislation, which we passed last night, these funds did not have the necessary structure to be effective.

However, should the House send the bill to the President tonight--as we expect--a structure will go into effect that will immediately begin collecting cord blood units and making them available to Americans suffering from a variety of diseases from blood cancers to neurological diseases. Without the structure that cord blood bill provides, many fewer patients will benefit and some waiting on cord blood will die.

To highlight this, I will share a few stories of real people who have been successfully treated with cord blood stem cells.

The first story is of Keone Penn, a young man cured of sickle cell anemia a disease that afflicts more than 70,000 Americans, particularly African Americans. Keone, of course, tells his story the best; so listen to his testimony before a Senate Science Subcommittee hearing that I chaired on June 12, 2003:

My name is Keone Penn. Two days ago, I turned 17 years old. Five years ago, they said I wouldn't live to be 17. They said I'd be dead within 5 years. I was born with sickle cell anemia. Sickle cell is a very bad disease. I had a stroke when I was 5 years old. Things got even worse after that. My life has been full of pain crises, blood transfusions every two weeks, and more times in the hospital than I can count. The year before I had my stem cell transplant, I was in the hospital 13 times. I never was able to have a normal life. My stem

cell transplant was not easy, but I thank God that I'm still here. I will graduate from high school this year. I want to become a chef because I love to cook. I think I'm pretty good at it. Sickle cell is now a part of my past. One year after my transplant, I was pronounced cured. Stem cells saved my life.

It is important to realize though that cord blood treats many other diseases. Consider the story of Erik Haines, who received a successful cord blood stem cell transplant to treat Krabbe disease. Krabbe disease is an often fatal neurological disease. This helps to illustrate how broadly effective cord blood stem cells really are.

Erik Haines made medical history at age 2 when he became one of the first cord blood transplant patients at the University of Minnesota on July 24, 1994. Erik had suffered from the genetic blood disorder Krabbe disease, from which his younger brother Adam died. Since his umbilical cord blood transplant, annual exams at the University of Minnesota are not full of foreboding or anxiety; and check-ups with Erik's pediatrician likewise seem routine. Also, like many boys, Erik enjoys baseball, soccer, and swimming. Erik's father Paul Haines says:

The only real lasting effects are complications from the radiation he received--small cataracts. He wears glasses and has a little trouble seeing the board from the back of the room.

Both Keone and Erik's treatments took place in the 1990s, and cord blood stem cell research has made even greater progress since then. We learn of new, exciting developments every month.

Just 2 weeks ago, we heard about this on local DC television stations.

On November 30, 2005, two local DC TV stations reported on separate life saving cures emerging from umbilical cord blood stem cells. Channel 7 focused on the Korean cord blood stem cell treatment for spinal cord injury and the procedure's first U.S. patient, a Virginia woman.

Channel 4 highlighted two children in a local family--Riverdale, MD--cured of SCIDS--severe combined immune deficiency syndrome--also

known as "bubble boy disease" by cord blood from unrelated donors.

And on October 23, 2005, the Chicago Tribune reported:

Cord blood is surprising researchers with previously unrecognized healing powers that go far beyond its known effectiveness against childhood leukemia and some other disorders. Early research in animals suggests that cord blood may provide a new bounty of cures and treatments for many other medical conditions, including heart attack, Parkinson's disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, spinal cord injury and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis In May, the New England Journal of Medicine published a study showing that a cord blood transplant performed as soon as possible after birth can, for the first time, stop the deadly course of Krabbe disease.

There are thousands of testimonies of the efficaciousness of cord blood stem cells. There are also innumerable new stories and medical journal articles on amazing advances in disease treatments in real human patients with cord blood stem cells.

There are more than ample, documented medical articles, on which I base my claim that because the Senate acted and passed the cord blood bill this week, more kids' lives will be saved.

As for speculative, destructive, human embryonic stem cell research, there is not yet even one patient trial with embryonic stem cells for any disease; and it is not for lack of years of research, prohibitions--there are none--or lack of funding. It is because embryonic stem cells form cancers and tumors due to their immature state. Regarding destructive human embryonic stem cell research, even the prestigious journal Science acknowledged on June 17, 2005, that:

It is nearly certain that the clinical benefits of the research are years or decades away. This is a message that desperate families and patients will not want to hear.

With last night's passage of the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act, the Senate formally recognized the lifesaving value of cord blood stem cell research. I have worked closely with Senator

Specter over the past few years to appropriate nearly \$20 million for the purpose of establishing a national cord blood bank. And I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the bipartisan legislation that passed out of this chamber last night.

I am also proud that we were able to move in a bipartisan manner on this legislation. Working alongside Senators Hatch, Dodd, Specter, Harkin, Enzi, and Frist on this issue was a pleasure and helps to demonstrate that the two parties can work together effectively.

Everybody wins with cord blood stem cell research. Patients win because they receive successful treatments and cures. Human dignity wins because cord blood stem cell research respects all human life and does not kill the young human embryo, as is the case with human-destructive embryonic stem cell research.

Cord blood doesn't just hold promise. Cord blood is producing real treatments and even real cures for a variety of maladies afflicting real people right now. Passage of this bill should be celebrated, and I commend my colleagues for this wonderful achievement.