

Samuel James Innes-Profile

Samuel Innes will be the second New Zealand child to undergo an umbilical cord blood treatment for a birth-related brain injury.

Samuel, who is now 4 years old, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when he was 2. He has been accepted for treatment in September to be re-infused with his own cord blood by paediatric oncologist, Dr Joanne Kurtzberg at Duke University, North Carolina, USA.

Since 2003, Dr Kurtzberg has reinfused over 200 children with their own cord blood for cerebral palsy and brain injury, including New Zealander Maia Friedlander, who was successfully treated with her own cord blood at Duke in August 2008. Maia, who suffered oxygen deprivation at birth, has made significant progress.

The first child to receive the treatment five years ago, American child Ryan Schneider, is now clear of all issues and is completely well. All of the other children who have received reinfusions for brain injury are reported to have shown improvement.

Until Ryan Schneider received his treatment at Duke in 2005, umbilical cord blood had mainly been used to rebuild children's immune systems after cancer treatment. Since then it's increasingly being used in regenerative medicine - which uses a child's own cord blood to cure failing, impaired or injured tissues.

Umbilical cord blood contains special stem cells which can only be collected at birth. Because they are an exact match to the person they are collected from, they have been used to successfully "reboot" immune systems after cancer treatment and are now being used to repair brain injury and Type 1 diabetes.

The physical effects of cerebral palsy range from very mild to severe. What is often overlooked are the effects that it can have on the family. Following a very traumatic birth, Rickie & Andy describe their experiences over the last four years as "sheer hell" - experiencing overwhelming anger with the system and disappointment and frustration along the way.

Since Samuel started experiencing small but very frequent focal seizures at 6 months, he has had 3 eye operations, an MRI scan, speech therapy, neurodevelopment assessments, specialist ophthalmology care and numerous paediatric appointments.

The Innes say they cannot describe how grateful they are that they made the decision to bank Samuel's cord blood as only children who have their own cord blood stored are able to receive the treatment at Duke.

"We have the support of our local doctor and feel that we have everything to gain, we owe it to Samuel to see whether we can give him a chance at a normal life," said Andy Innes.

Their message for parents-to-be in New Zealand is, "Bank your baby's cord blood. Everybody believes they will have the perfect birth and child, unfortunately that does not always happen."

Obviously to have this treatment is hugely expensive, and a cost that is expected to be covered by the family. The total costs of this treatment is \$35,000, Rickie and Andy have raised \$20,000 with a further \$15,000 needed. As Samuel leaves for America on the 7th of September they are now turning to the public to help raise the balance to support their endeavour to provide their son at this young age with a new start.

For this reason they would be grateful if you would give careful consideration to providing any financial support to allow them to obtain this treatment. Your funding will not only help to support them as a family, but to help create greater awareness to the wider New Zealand community, and the new generation of the health benefits of saving cord blood at birth.

If you would like to make a contribution please send a cheque to Samuel James Innes, Po Box 352 Whitianga, with your full details attached.

If you would like to make a direct credit to his Cord Blood Travel account the number is:

03 1578 0086482 00

Please send through your full details to andrew.innes@raywhite.com as Rickie and Andy would like to thank you personally and keep you up to date with Samuel's progress.

Thank you for taking the time to read Samuel's profile.

