

Cord blood transplant helps some people with myelodysplastic syndromes

What were researchers trying to learn?

Researchers wanted to learn how well people with myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) do when they have a transplant using cord blood. They also wanted to learn whether a survey tool that calculates risk could predict transplant results.

When a patient needs a transplant using a donor's healthy cells, those cells can come from an adult donor or a baby's umbilical cord. A transplant doctor's 1st choice is usually a related donor (most often a brother or sister). But about 70% of patients (7 out of 10) don't have a close match in their family. If a patient needs an unrelated donor, a transplant doctor will search for a matching donor or cord blood on registries such as the Be The Match Registry[®].

Cord blood is collected at birth and frozen until a patient needs it. On transplant day, the blood-forming cells are given to the patient through an intravenous (IV) catheter. The cells move to the bone marrow where they make healthy blood cells that the body needs.

Researchers studied 176 patients with MDS who had a cord blood transplant between 2004 and 2013.

What did they find?

Researchers used a risk score tool (Revised IPSS, or IPPSS-R) to decide whether people had low, medium, or high risk MDS. Then they looked at how well they did after transplant.

About 30% of people (3 in 10) were alive 3 years after cord blood transplant for MDS. People with lower risk scores were more likely to be alive. People who were healthier before transplant were also more likely to be alive.

Some people got a reduced-intensity preparative regimen, which uses lower doses of chemotherapy with or with radiation to prepare the body for transplant. For these people, the MDS was more likely to come back (relapse).

Important Point:

If someone with MDS does not have a matched family member or unrelated donor, a cord blood transplant might help.

Why is this important?

Transplant doctors can now give up-to-date information to people with MDS who are considering cord blood transplant. This can help doctors and patients decide whether to get a transplant or choose a different treatment.

What else should I keep in mind about this study?

The results of research studies are always limited in what they can and can't tell you. Only people with MDS who got a cord blood transplant were studied. So the results may not apply to people with other diseases or who get other types of transplant.

Also, some of the people in this study got a transplant more than 10 years ago. People with MDS do better now than they did in 2004. This can make it hard to know what the results mean for you.

Questions to ask your doctor

If you have MDS and are considering transplant, you may want to ask:

- Is a cord blood transplant a good option for me? Why or why not?
- What is my risk score?
- Is there anything about my health that would raise or lower my chances of survival?

Learn more about

- [This research study](#)
- [Myelodysplastic syndromes](#)
- [Cord blood transplants](#)

Source

Gerds AT, Woo Ahn K, Hu ZH, et al. Outcomes after umbilical cord blood transplantation for myelodysplastic syndromes. *Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation*. 2017 Jun 1; 23(6):971-979. Epub 2017 Mar 10.

About this research summary

Ground-breaking research into blood and marrow transplant is happening every day. That research is having a significant impact on the survival and quality of life of thousands of transplant patients. But the research is written by scientists for scientists. By providing research news in an easy-to-understand way, patients, caregivers, and families have access to useful information that can help them make treatment decisions.

This information is provided on behalf of the Consumer Advocacy Committee of the CIBMTR[®] (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research[®]). The CIBMTR is a research collaboration between the National Marrow Donor Program[®]/Be The Match[®] and the Medical College of Wisconsin.