

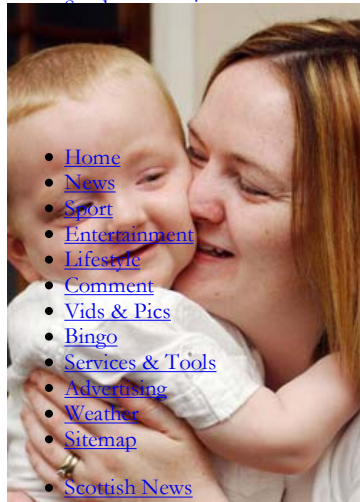
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Exclusive: The Scots boy saved from leukaemia by Spanish baby's stem cells

Jul 7 2008 By Lisa Adams



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Jordan Harden with mum Claire

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THE package of blood from Spain would barely have filled a thimble. But for little Jordan Harden, the stem cells it contained meant the difference between life and death.

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"It was a tiny amount but these cells are liquid gold," Jordan's mum Claire said yesterday.

"I thought, 'How can they have the power to give my boy a second shot at life?' But they did."

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Leukaemia was attacking Jordan's blood cells and killing him.

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Chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant had failed to cure him and the stem cells were his last hope.

Jordan's doctors at Yorkhill Hospital in Glasgow searched the world for a suitable donor and found a match 1000 miles away in Barcelona.

They transplanted the stem cells, taken from a new baby's umbilical cord, into three-year-old Jordan's body.

And just a month later, he was well enough to go home. The stem cells had enabled him to grow the healthy blood cells he needed to survive.

Jordan had overcome terrifying odds.

When he was diagnosed as a 10-week-old baby with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, medics gave him just a 10 per cent chance of life.

A doctor at Wishaw General Hospital, Lanarkshire, broke the news of Jordan's illness to his parents. Claire said: "He closed his eyes and changed our lives forever with the word 'leukaemia'."

Jordan was transferred to Yorkhill, where he spent the next year of his life.

Seeing her son in a cancer unit was a hammer blow for Claire, from Wishaw.

She said: "It was a shock to walk into the Schiehallion ward and see all these kids with no hair and feeding tubes.

"My first reaction was, 'My boy's fine.

What's he doing in here?'

"He was too young for this. Why had this happened to us?"

Jordan went through months of gruelling chemotherapy then had a bone marrow transplant in April 2006.

He got stronger after the surgery and Claire and husband Garry, 29, dared to hope he was safe.

But just weeks later, his doctor, Brenda Gibson, had to tell Claire and Garry that his cancer had returned.

"She took us into that room at the end of the ward that all the parents hate," Claire recalled.

"After a transplant and chemotherapy, they didn't know if his body could take any more. It might be better to just enjoy the time we had left with him."

Claire was pregnant at the time with Jordan's little brother Joshua and hoped desperately that his umbilical cord would provide the stem cells Jordan needed for a transplant.

"I was convinced Joshua would be a match," she said. "I'd fallen pregnant and Jordan had had a relapse. I felt it had all happened for a reason."

But Claire's hopes were dashed again. Joshua's cord blood was not a match.

"I couldn't handle it," she admitted. "All we could do was pray for a miracle."

That miracle happened just a few hours later, when the doctors found the Spanish donor on an international stem cell register.

A courier delivered the frozen cells to Glasgow and Jordan had his transplant in October last year.

Nearly nine months on, Jordan looks like any other healthy toddler as he runs around the house playing with a drum.

He starts at nursery after the holidays.

"Look at him," said Claire with pride. "He's a bright little boy. He's counting to 10. Nothing holds him back.

"We got there, thanks to excellent medical staff and our mystery Spanish life-saver."

Claire now wants the NHS to give all new parents the chance to freeze their children's cord blood.

She asked: "Why can't other babies have the same chance as Jordan?"

The NHS currently store less than one per cent of cord blood and cords in Scotland are routinely thrown away.

The family have paid to have Joshua's cord blood stored by a private company, in the hope that it might help another child in the future.

To donate the Yorkhill Children's Foundation, a charity who pay for equipment, research and treatment and work to make the hospital a less frightening place for kids, go to www.yorkhillchildrensfoundation.org or call 0141 201 6917.

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☺ I am absolutely delighted for this family yet disgusted that this is not offered routinely - decision makers in this country need to take notice - prevention IS better than cure and no lives should be lost due to money- the nhs allow every one who sets foot in this country to have free medical treatment, i am no racist i have many asian friends and i know personally one woman who has come to the UK 6 times to deliver her babies FREE. money needs to be found from somewhere to back this up. there are only 3 hospitals in the UK that save cords and the US do this automatically, i urge all parents to consider the implications of your child having a terminal illness and they could be saved if people are affluent enough to afford to save their cords. - PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE _ SURELY I AM NOT ALONE IN THINKING THAT THIS IS POLITICS GONE MAD!!!! i have personally just joined the Anthony Nolan register and urge everyone to consider doing the same, please help save someone's life - i pray i am a match for someone..

posted by: tigereyes Mon Jul 07, 2008 12:33 pm

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