

Archbishop to Speak at Press Conference Announcing First Umbilical Cord Blood Bank Program Aimed at Curing Diseases Through Adult Stem Cells

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Archbishop of Baltimore, will join executives of Mercy Medical Center and a New Jersey-based blood bank, on **Monday, October 11** at 10 a.m. at Mercy Medical Center (Weinberg Center, 2nd Floor, Truman Semans Conference Room) to announce Maryland's first public umbilical cord blood banking program. Umbilical cord blood contains adult stem cells, which can be used to successfully treat more than 90 life-threatening diseases, including many types of cancers and blood disorders such as sickle cell disease.

Beginning October 11, women giving birth at Mercy Medical Center will have the opportunity to donate their babies' umbilical cord blood (at no charge to them) to the National Marrow Donor Program registry for use by patients in need of transplants in Maryland or worldwide. Donation is harmless to the mother and baby and completely painless.

Increasing the number of African-American cord blood donors was a key goal of this partnership, given their scarcity in the current donor population. According to the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute of NIH, in the United States, sickle cell disease occurs in about one out of every 500 African American births. African Americans are also prone to contract leukemia, multiple myeloma, Hodgkin's lymphoma and many other diseases that are treatable with umbilical cord blood.

Mercy Medical Center is a 136-year-old, university-affiliated medical facility named one of the top 100 hospitals in the nation, among 10 best centers for women's health and was among *US News and World Report's* 2010 list of "Best Hospitals."