
Health Care Committee

HB 2474

Brief Description: Establishing placental and umbilical cord blood donation pilot projects.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Williams, Appleton, Moeller, Wallace, Cody and Hunter.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates two pilot projects to expand access to placental and umbilical cord blood donation programs.

Hearing Date: 1/31/06

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

Stem cells can be distinguished from other types of cells in three ways. First, they are capable of dividing and replicating (renewing) themselves indefinitely. Second, stem cells are unspecialized. This means that they do not perform any specific function, as do heart muscle cells, red blood cells, or nerve cells. Lastly, stem cells can create specialized cells. While stem cells do not perform a particular function, they can give rise to specialized cells while remaining unspecialized themselves.

One type of stem cell, the hematopoietic progenitor cell (HPC), is responsible for the continuous production of several types of normal blood cells. HPCs have been used in transplants to treat leukemia, lymphoma, aplastic anemia, and certain inherited immunity disorders. Umbilical cord blood is similar to bone marrow in that they both contain large amounts of HPCs and has been used as an alternative to bone marrow for many treatments. According to the Institute of Medicine (Institute), HPCs obtained from cord blood have a lower risk of a poor immune response to transplantation than HPCs obtained from bone marrow. In addition, the Institute states that cord blood is readily available, has a low risk for transmitting infectious disease, and poses minimal risk to the mother or the infant.

There are both private and public cord blood banks that will store umbilical cord blood donations from newborns. Private banks store the donated cord blood of the donor for a fee. Public banks will accept the donation and store it for free and make it available to any patient that needs it. In 2005, the Institute issued a report recommending the creation of a nationwide cord blood stem cell bank program.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Health (Department) must establish two pilot programs that allow expectant mothers to donate placental and umbilical cord blood to a public blood bank. One pilot project shall be in Eastern Washington and the other in Western Washington. The pilot project is to be administered in coordination with blood bank resources operating in Washington. The Department shall also create a work group to provide advice and consultation in administering the program and to comment on the report.

The pilot projects shall: (1) increase access to placental and umbilical cord blood donation programs and public blood banks; (2) facilitate the receipt, storage, and distribution of donations for use by patients and, where the donation is not suitable for patients, for research projects; and (3) increase awareness about donation options among health care providers and expectant parents, including in racial and ethnic minority communities. The Department of Health is required to report to the Legislature on the pilot project results by December 1, 2008. The report shall provide information about donations received and the use of the donations for patients and research, as well as recommendations for expanding access and increasing public awareness about public blood banks.

Legislative findings are made that placental and umbilical cord blood is an alternative to bone marrow in many medical therapies; there is an insufficient supply of placental and umbilical cord blood; there is a need to increase the ethnic diversity of the supply of placental and umbilical cord blood; and potential exists for the use of placental and umbilical cord blood for research.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.