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Saturday, Jan 05, 2008

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Jeevan Blood Bank to set up stem cell bank

No cost attached for poor patients

Keeping stock

About 30% of total capacity will be for private storage.

Initial cost of project at Rs 4 crore.

Stem cells help cure over 70 medical conditions.

Our Bureau

Chennai, Jan. 4 Chennai-based Jeevan Blood Bank plans to establish public stem cell bank to offer stem cells for treatment of the needy.

Unveiling the plan, the Chairman of Jeevan Blood Bank and Research Centre, Dr P. Srinivasan, said the stem cells would help in curing more than 70 medical conditions including blood cancers and other haematological conditions like thalassemia.

Called Jeevan Stem Cell Bank (JSCB), the bank would collect umbilical cord blood from women immediately after their delivery, harvest stem cells, test for transmissible infections, store and ultimately release safe compatible units to anyone who needed them.

Towards this, JSCB would be associating with various hospitals in the city. It is called 'stem cell' because it is harvested from the umbilical cord, which acts as root/stem for formation of several cells right from the formation of the foetus.

Target

According to Dr Srinivasan, JSCB was the first not-for-profit stem cell bank in the country. JSCB project would go live before the end of March this year, he said, and added that the target was to collect about 40,000 units of stem cells in five years. The bank hopes to complete accreditation processes by international agencies by December.

The initial capital cost of the project was Rs 4 crore, but funding requirement would go up to Rs 20 crore in five years, since the capacity of the stem cell harvesting and the relative storage facility would be increase significantly, Dr Srinivasan said.

Costs

Answering a question, he said it would cost around Rs 40,000 to harvest and store one unit of stem cells with the bank.

About 30 per cent of the bank's total capacity would be utilised for private storage option while the rest is meant for the general public.

For the poor

"We will charge a one-time fee of Rs 70,000 from private parties towards processing and storage of stem cells. JSCB will make available matched stem cell units free of cost to poor patients, while we will charge about Rs 1 lakh for other patients. The same will cost about Rs 11 lakh in Singapore," said the medical director of JSCB, Dr Saranya Nandakumar. The income generated would help run the bank and also serve the poor patients, she added.

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