

Baby Girl Returns Home after Successful Stem Cell Treatment

By Cai Wenjun | November 12, 2015, Thursday |



Zhao Jiaxin is back in her parents' arms yesterday after being released from hospital in Shanghai. The baby earlier underwent stem cell therapy at Fudan University's Children's Hospital to treat a bowel disease. The stem cells were extracted from umbilical cord blood provided by a donor. — Xinhua

A baby girl was discharged from hospital yesterday after undergoing stem cell therapy to treat a bowel disease that likely killed her sister, doctors told Shanghai Daily. Zhao Jiaxin, now 10 months old, is the first person in China to be treated for Crohn's disease using stem cells from donated umbilical cord blood. When she was just 8 days old, Zhao began suffering from diarrhea and fever — symptoms that had beset her sister, who died when she was 5 months old. "We feared so much that we might lose her, too," Ji Jiannan, the baby's mother, said after her daughter was discharged from hospital yesterday.

Zhao's father, Zhao Mingwei, said: "Our first daughter succumbed to the disease, so when Yuanyuan (Zhao's nickname) started showing the same symptoms when she was just a week old, we were terrified." "We took her to several local clinics, but nothing worked," he said.

The family lives in central China's Henan Province, but, after finding no luck at home, they decided to take the baby to Shanghai in March. It was there, at Fudan University's Children's Hospital that the infant underwent the life-saving procedure.

After hearing the story of Zhao's sister, doctors conducted a series of genetic tests on the baby and determined she was suffering from Crohn's disease.

"The only effective treatment is a stem cell transplant," Dr Huang Ying, director of the hospital's digestive disease department, told Shanghai Daily.

“It can help to repair the genetic deformity and control the symptoms of the disease,” he said.

While the treatment is controversial when stem cells are taken from embryos that are later discarded, Zhao’s stem cells were extracted from the blood of a donor’s umbilical cord.

In the past, bone marrow has been used in similar procedures. On average, recovery takes about six months, but using umbilical cord blood appears to be more effective, Huang said. “Compared with bone marrow, Zhao’s recovery was much quicker,” he said.

“The baby’s condition improved rapidly once she had received the umbilical cord cell transplant. She was discharged last night and returned home to Henan Province with her parents,” Huang said.

Mom Ji couldn’t have been happier. “I remember when she was 100 days old; she was skinny like a skeleton. Now look at her: She’s almost got a puffy face,” she said. With the help of social workers, the family managed to raise 300,000 yuan (US\$47,000) to cover the therapy fees. “I just think my family is really lucky,” she said.

Reference: <http://www.shanghaidaily.com/metro/health-and-science/Baby-girl-returns-home-after-successful-stem-cell-treatment/shdaily.shtml>