

FIRST SUCCESSFUL SAVIOUR SIBLING TREATMENT FOR UK

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A nine year old girl from Norfolk has had a life-saving transplant from a so-called saviour sibling. Megan Matthews would have died but for tissue donated by her baby brother Max. It's the first time that the entire treatment has been successfully conducted in the UK.

Megan was born with Fanconi Anaemia, a rare inherited condition which can cause bone marrow failure. Her body could not make blood and she needed transfusions every few weeks. She was also unable to fight infections.

A worldwide search for a suitable bone marrow donor failed. Megan's parents, Katie and Andy from King's Lynn, said they always wanted another baby, but natural conception would have given them just a one in four chance of having a child that was a perfect tissue match. There was also a risk that the baby would have carried the same genetic disorder as Megan.

Gift of life

Medical teams in Cambridge, Bristol and Nottingham coordinated treatment to create a baby who was a perfect tissue match for Megan and then to use the baby's donated cells to treat Megan's blood disorder.

Two embryos were implanted and a single baby boy, Max, was born 18 months ago. Max's umbilical cord blood was preserved and he later needed an operation to recover bone marrow.

The cells were used in Megan's transplant in July. She used to require blood transfusions every three weeks and was unable to fight infections. Since the transplant, Megan has not required any blood transfers and now attends weekly check-up.

Dr Mike Gattens, a paediatric haematologist said: "This has transformed Megan's life." Before she was a sickly child needing lots of medical attention - over the next few months and years I hope we will see less and less of her. "She is a very active child and I hope she can just get on and enjoy her life."

Reference: <http://www.bbc.com/news/health-12055034>