



Cord Blood Helps Missouri 'Bubble Boy' Move Out of ICU, Wiggle

Thursday , July 10, 2008

Associated Press

The first year of any baby's life is full of firsts.

ADVERTISEMENT

But a 9-month-old baby has blessed his parents with a second round of remarkable milestones as he tries to conquer a rare immune condition that has thousands of people praying for him and more than 2,000 willing to share their bone marrow, if he needs it.

Instead, a recent umbilical-cord-blood transplant at Children's Mercy Hospital has transformed Granton Bayless from a frail, nearly immobile patient into a bubbly baby who wiggles when he sees his masked and gloved parents enter his sterile hospital room.

The boy was recently moved out of the hospital's pediatric intensive care unit where he spent more than three months.

"We are experiencing him growing up again," said his father, Daniel Bayless. "He is able to move again. He is able to play. He is able to smile."

Granton, of Bolivar, Mo., has a rare condition called severe combined immunodeficiency that prevents his body from producing enough cells to fight off disease. The condition is often referred to as the "bubble boy" disease because its victims are so vulnerable to infectious diseases that some must live in protective bubbles.

[Click here to comment on this story.](#)

Admitted to Children's Mercy on March 28, Granton battled pneumonia and respiratory syncytial virus so severe that holes developed in his fragile lungs.

Medical staff placed him on a ventilator because he could not breathe on his own. They inserted tubes into his chest to suction out air leaking from his lungs. They gave him medicine that paralyzed him so equipment wouldn't hurt him if he moved and so he wouldn't burn energy or oxygen.

His parents couldn't hold him for two months.

Now, Granton plays with everything in his reach, including a small light toy saber from his cousin Addie. The ventilator was removed Friday. There is talk about soon removing the lone remaining air tube.

His improvement thrills the family, friends and strangers who have rallied around Granton and who follow his medical saga through daily blog updates posted by his parents.

While Granton awaited the cure of a bone-marrow or an umbilical-cord-blood transplant, five towns with ties to the Bayless family - Bolivar; Topeka and Dearing, Kan.; and Miami and Yukon, Okla. - held bone-marrow registry drives. It was hoped that someone could be a match for Granton or some of the other estimated 6,000 people across the country awaiting transplants. About 2,200 people registered, which amazed officials with the National Marrow Donor Program in Minneapolis.

A bone-marrow match was found for Granton, but not from those drives. All Granton's parents knew of the match was that the donor was 35 - old enough that she probably would have had respiratory syncytial virus. That meant her immune system already knew how to kill the virus, which was in Granton's body.

But, Daniel Bayless said, when cells go after the virus, they go after "everything around it" very quickly. There was a chance Granton's lungs would be rapidly destroyed, he said.

Granton's parents made the critical decision to go ahead with an umbilical cord-blood transplant, in which cells would slowly attack the virus. Umbilical-cord-blood cells are taken from a baby's umbilical cord and placenta. If the cord blood is suitable for transplant, it is tissue-typed, stored in a liquid nitrogen freezer and listed on the donor registry.

Granton received his transplant on June 10. Daniel Bayless said that because of the donor program's confidentiality guidelines, all he and his wife, Jenni, would ever know of the donation was that it came from a boy born in 2000 and was stored in St. Louis.

So far, Granton is improving, his parents said. A recent blood test on him showed that 86 percent of his white cells were donor cells. A recent test showed Granton had produced "natural killer cells," which play a major role in fighting infections.

These are key milestones in a transplant because they indicate that the donor cells are starting to produce other cells, said John Miller, medical director of donor medical services for the National Marrow Donor Program.

Even though risks remain - the most dangerous being donor cells attacking Granton's organs - his parents are hopeful.

Granton's weight dropped from 16 pounds at 3 months to 12 pounds, 5 ounces at 6 months. This week he was tipping the scale at nearly 18 pounds.

A monitor clipped to one of Granton's toes used to beep only when the infant wasn't getting enough oxygen.

"Lately, it has been beeping because he kicks it off," Daniel Bayless said with a broad smile.

And, beginning Friday, his parents could hold Granton as much as they want because the ventilator had been removed.

When Jenni Bayless holds her son, she said, "he melts into my arms and just loves it."

The parents now talk about the day when they no longer will have to put on gowns and gloves to enter Granton's room in the pediatric intensive-care unit. They talk about the day when they no longer will have to wear masks, allowing their son to see that parents can smile, too.

Meanwhile, the Baylesses have received endless support.

The blog site for Granton has gotten more than 193,000 hits since it was established in early April. More than 110 comments appeared the day that key blood results came back. Stacks of cards and letters have overwhelmed the family.

"And many of the people ... we don't even know," Daniel Bayless said.

A cousin of Jenni Bayless did a benefit bicycle ride last month that raised about \$8,000 for the family. Children in Bolivar frustrated about being too young to donate bone marrow raised \$800 in a bake sale.

"It's a wonderful town for that sort of thing," said Mayor Charles Ealy. "If there is a real need, people really join together."

The president of the Bolivar Area Chamber of Commerce, Roxy Hudson, said her church, Brighton Baptist Church, placed Granton on its prayer list.

"He's on everyone's prayer list," she said.

Jenni Bayless' relatives have been approached by strangers while shopping in Springfield. They notice the special T-shirts made to raise money for the Bayless family. The shirts have a picture of Granton and the words "Don't Worry. Pray."

Daniel Bayless has witnessed the support. He has been traveling back and forth to Bolivar to teach a summer school course.

"Every single day I am there I see at least one kid, one teacher or one stranger wearing the 'Pray for Granton' T-shirt."

And he has met a lot of eager bone-marrow donors.

"People tell me, 'I hope I get that call. I hope I can save a life.' "

SEARCH

GO

[Click here for FOX News RSS Feeds](#)

Advertise on FOX News Channel, FOXNews.com and FOX News Radio

Jobs at FOX News Channel.

Internships At Fox News (Summer Application Deadline is March 15, 2007)
Terms of use. Privacy Statement. For FOXNews.com comments write to
foxnewsonline@foxnews.com; For FOX News Channel comments write to
comments@foxnews.com

© Associated Press. All rights reserved.

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Copyright 2008 FOX News Network, LLC. All rights reserved.
All market data delayed 20 minutes.