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Article from: Sunday Herald Sun

Suellen Hinde

March 02, 2008 12:00am

AS Darcy Miller plays with baby brother Jordan, there's more to their relationship than the love between two siblings.

Darcy, 6, has life-threatening cystic fibrosis and Jordan, although only four months old, could hold the key to saving his life.

When Jordan was born, his cord blood was banked in the hope it might provide a cure for his older brother.

Researchers hope stem cells will be able to rebuild lung tissue damaged by the genetic disorder or be used to grow new compatible lungs.

Mother-of-three Susan Miller said finding out about Darcy's condition was a shock.

"I had the gene and Greg (her husband) had the gene," she said.

"I never planned to have a third, but when I fell pregnant with Jordan I had the CF test and he was also clear."

Mrs Miller said she read about the potential for cord blood to provide a cure while pregnant with Jordan.

"I didn't get pregnant for that reason, but it was a bonus," she said.

It was a one-in-four chance that Jordan's cells would be identical and be able to be used for Darcy's treatment.

Cord blood banking group Biocell, in partnership with Australian Unity, store cord blood free of charge for families with a child suffering from cystic fibrosis.

Leading CF researcher Professor Bob Williamson said they were one step closer to "making this work".

Prof Williamson said his research team had now identified one protein in the cord blood stem cells that could help build a lung.

"Now we have to see if the CF protein in the stem cells can be switched on and it has to be deemed to be safe," he said.

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Cystic fibrosis sufferer Darcy Miller, 6, with his brother Jordan, four months. Picture: Alex Coppel

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