

LifeCell to launch menstrual blood banking services soon

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The Chennai-based LifeCell International, a pioneer in stem cell banking services providing and research, technology and therapy, is all set to launch menstrual blood banking service in the country in a couple of months.

The company has received nod from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) to collect the menstrual blood for research purposes and is in the process of validation prior to launch the service, said Mayur Abhaya, executive director, LifeCell. Cryo-Cell, the company's technology partner, has already developed the method and has formed a subsidiary, Célle, in United States for banking menstrual blood for stem cell harvesting.

The multipotent mesenchymal stem cells developed from menstrual blood could be used to treat various lifestyle related disorders and offers a vast market to the company when compared to the traditional sources for stem cells. Menstrual blood, which is a better source of stem cells since it regenerates every month, can be collected and used to treat patients much easier than the other sources of stem cells.

"Our current market which represents only pregnant women would be of two percent, but we expect that the new service will open up a huge market for us, since almost every women in the country would come under the segment," said Mayur.

He added that the company is also considering to extend the menstrual blood banking service in a lower cost compared to the current charges for umbilical cord blood banking. "We are considering such an option, but can only say about it after a couple of months," he said.

However, the company has to wait the regulations on stem cells to fall in place before offering the service for therapeutic purposes. At present, the approvals are only to collect menstrual blood for research purposes in stem cell harvesting and therapy.

Besides introduction of the new service, LifeCell is also planning to foray into the Middle East market with almost six collection centres, one in each country in the region, to be set up within an year. The company has already set up its fully owned office in Dubai and signed an agreement with a local partner to establish offices in Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain, said Mayur. However, he refused to divulge on the details of the partnership at this early stage.

Further, the operations in Sri Lanka which has been carried out with a local partner at present, will be taken over completely by LifeCell. The company is currently going through approval process with the Sri Lankan government and is expected to start operation in next three to six months. With the recent changes in the Sri Lankan market, including the political developments, it would be easier to operate on its own in this market, he averred.

The overseas operations will be initially focused fully on the Middle East market. LifeCell currently has 50 centres in India. LifeCell is India's first and largest umbilical cord blood stem cell bank facilitating the cryogenic preservation of stem cells. With the menstrual blood banking service, LifeCell will become the first and only comprehensive stem cells solutions provider to offer a complete spectrum of services in stem cells through multi-service banking, R&D, clinical trials and stem cell therapy, claims the company.