

Medicine **MAN**

By Todd Deery **DR. ED GUINDI TURNED A LIFE-ALTERING ACCIDENT INTO A POTENTIALLY LIFE-SAVING PROCESS.**

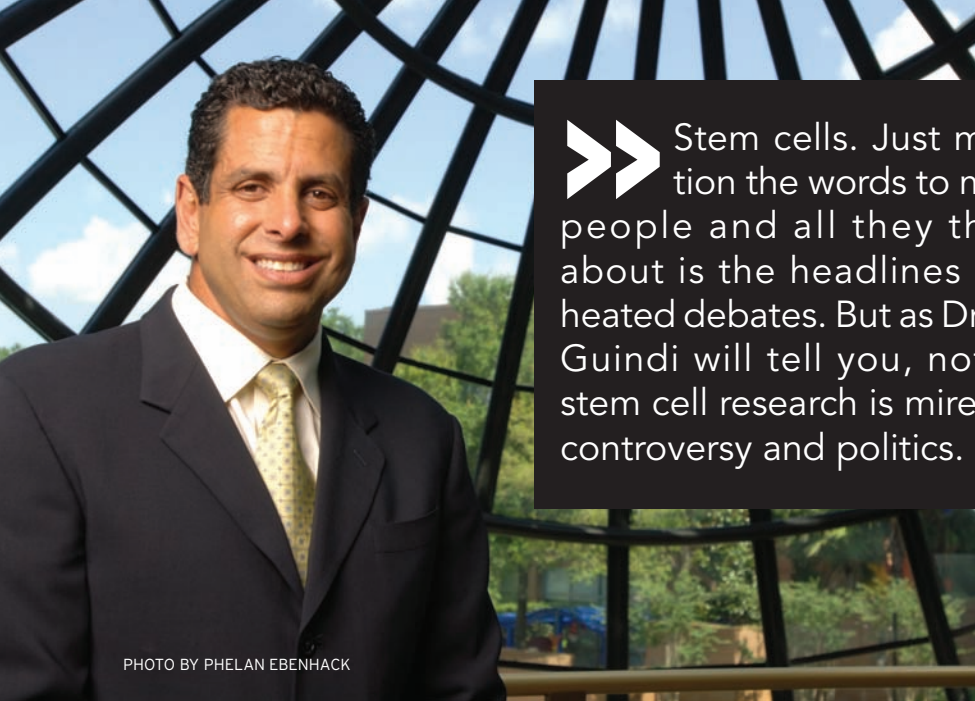


PHOTO BY PHELAN EBENHACK

➤➤ Stem cells. Just mention the words to most people and all they think about is the headlines and heated debates. But as Dr. Ed Guindi will tell you, not all stem cell research is mired in controversy and politics.

adults, including blood cancers (leukemias, lymphomas and myelomas) and other blood diseases such as sickle cell anemia and thalassemia.

ACCIDENT BY DESIGN

Dr. Guindi's entry into this exciting field happened literally by accident. In 1993 Guindi founded the Advanced Women's Health Specialists, an obstetrical practice that soon grew to seven offices that were delivering approximately 1,500 babies a year. Then on his 35th birthday in 1996, Guindi had a parasailing accident that broke 15 bones and left him temporarily unable to walk, talk or move his arms. After months of painful rehab, he tried to return to his former life of delivering babies, but his injuries made it impossible.

Out of obstetrics, Guindi had been keeping his eye on this still emerging field of cord blood transplants and knew it had real promise.

"I missed medicine and helping people. It was like having a big part of me taken away," Guindi says.

With a business partner, he founded CORD:USE in 2004 and used his medical experience to develop the least intrusive, most effective way of obtaining cord blood cells.

In CORD:USE's first year, they partnered with the Cord Blood Bank at the Duke Medical Center and Dr. Joanne Kurtzberg. Kurtzberg is a pioneer in cord blood transplants, having performed

Guindi is president and CEO of CORD:USE, an Orlando biotech company that harvests medical stem cells from the umbilical cords of newly delivered babies.

"Embryonic stem cells are wrought with religious and political controversy because of the process used to obtain them," Guindi says. "But getting stem cells from cord blood during childbirth doesn't harm the baby or the mother in any way."

So while the authorization of federal money for embryonic stem cell research may still seem a while away, CORD:USE has used its partnerships and people to help supply hope for the more than 35,000 estimated people who could benefit from a blood stem cell transplant each year.

This miraculous process is fairly simple. After a consenting mother delivers her baby in one of CORD:USE's partner hospitals, a highly trained CORD:USE technician takes the placenta to an on-site lab and extracts as large a cord blood sample from it as possible. This sample is naturally rich in healthy stem cells.

Then the sample is packaged and quickly shipped to Duke University, where it is screened for infectious diseases, cryogenically frozen and added to the National Marrow Donor Program's registry. The whole process is done in less than 48 hours and is completely free for the donor. What was once medical waste is now being used to help treat more than 70 different types of diseases in both children and

more than 750 umbilical cord blood stem cell transplants. But beyond the medical expertise, Guindi also found a kindred soul who reflects his, and CORD:USE's, mission.

"Dr. Kurtzberg is a selfless physician and works tirelessly to help her patients," he says. "We'll be emailing each other at one in the morning, sharing information and answering questions we each have."

Guindi continues to flesh out his staff with national experts who share his passion for helping others. He also continues to partner with local and national hospitals, including the Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women and Babies in Orlando. With that hospital delivering more than 13,000 babies a year, CORD:USE's presence there has turned it into the largest cord blood collection site in the nation.

"I realized that good things can come from a bad thing, like my accident," comments Guindi. "CORD:USE is my way of still being able to help literally thousands of people."

While the debate over embryonic stem cell research continues, President Bush signed a bill in 2005 that authorized \$79 million for the collection of cord blood stem cells with the goal of adding 150,000 new units to the nation's current inventory. This will produce enough units to provide matches to 90 percent

"EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS ARE WROUGHT WITH RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CONTROVERSY BECAUSE OF THE PROCESS USED TO OBTAIN THEM. BUT GETTING STEM CELLS FROM CORD BLOOD DURING CHILD-BIRTH DOESN'T HARM THE BABY OR THE MOTHER IN ANY WAY."

— DR. ED GUINDI

of all patients in need. Individual states have also started ratifying bills to increase expectant parents' awareness of cord blood donation and private storage, and to support the collection of cord blood.


But despite all the national attention, Guindi says that letting the public know about this life-giving procedure is still the biggest challenge he faces. To that end, CORD:USE has brought on board celebrity athletes, like Julius Erving, Alex

Rodriguez and Rusty Wallace, who believe in the procedure and can help spread the word.

"Sometimes getting people to listen to a doctor is tough," Guindi says, laughing. "But when a celebrity speaks, people tend to listen."

So what does the future hold? The

field has lots of room to expand. And with the Burnham Institute and UCF's medical college coming soon, Guindi sees no better place to be than Central Florida.

"We plan to grow this process and get into as many hospitals as we can. That allows us to grow the diversity and quantity of our samples," he explains. "And that saves lives. What lies ahead is as exciting to us as what's happening today." 



THE ROYAL TREATMENT FOR ROAD WARRIORS.

When the body is weary but the brain needs to be on, it's time for Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport. You'll love it for the location and the luxury with its newly renovated, impeccably designed rooms, featuring down comforters, soft pillows, 340 thread count sheets (ahhh, now that's comfort); a host of terrific business amenities, like high speed Internet, elegantly appointed boardrooms, great dining and Hyatt caliber service; and the ambiance of our soaring six story tropical atrium, outdoor pool and sundeck with runway views. So give yourself a break and stay at the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport, where relaxation and rejuvenation are always included, no extra charge.

The next time you're heading out on the road, call 407.825.1234 or visit us at orlandoairport.hyatt.com.

