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Press release

**The new collaboration of Hygeia Hospital Tirana with Stem Health Hellas-
The first stem cell bank in Albania**

Hygeia Hospital Tirana collaborates with Stem Health Hellas, the best stem cell bank in Europe, to offer for the first time in Albania the collection and storage of umbilical cord blood and tissue stem cells. Stem-Health Hellas is the first family stem cell bank in Europe and the only bank in Greece that has been accredited by the international organization FACT-NetCord. Accreditation by FACT-NetCord is the ultimate warranty that a bank follows the highest quality and safety standards that are required for successful transplantations.

For this purpose, the 6th Conference of Hygeia Hospital Tirana was organized, entitled: "Stem Cells: The Future in Medicine", organized on November 26, 2011. The conference stressed the importance of stem cells, their applications and the benefits of this service for the Albanian citizens. Greek doctors brought their experience in the collection and storage procedures of the umbilical cord blood and tissue and they also shared with the Albanian doctors their knowledge about the existent and future applications of stem cells for the treatment of a broad array of diseases. Representatives of Stem Health Hellas were present for the official announcement of this collaboration with Hygeia Hospital Tirana for the first time in Albania.

The CEO of Hygeia Hospital Tirana, Mr. Kyriakos Kopsidis, stated: "For the first time in Albania, an extremely important service is offered to Albanian citizens: the stem cell family banking: a novelty in medicine. Now we make it possible in Albania through our collaboration with the stem cell bank of Stem Health Hellas. We are very proud to make real something which was unimaginable several years ago: the treatment of severe diseases and health problems through the blood and tissue of the umbilical cord of the child. It is a miracle of science which future parents need to become aware of and grasp the opportunity when their child is born."

The vice president of Stem Health Hellas, Dr. Gregory Nicolaidis, insisted on the criteria of quality and safety of a stem cell bank. He stated that "Stem Health Hellas is the only private family bank in Europe, accredited by the most prestigious international organization FACT-NetCord. Only 27 stem cell banks all over the world are accredited by this organization". Referring to the culture of the company he also said "integrity, honesty, politeness and superior customer service are deeply ingrained throughout the company".

One of the members of the organizing committee of the conference, Dr Vassilios Kellaris said: "the last 20 years more than 20.000 cord blood transplantations have been performed worldwide for the treatment of hematopoietic malignancies, metabolic disorders and some cases of solid tumors. Family storage of stem cells is very important as it has been proven that the sibling is the best donor. In addition to that, a large number of clinical trials with mesenchymal stem cells derived from umbilical cord tissue are in progress".

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Dr. Vasil Angjeli, Obstetric-Gynecologist at Hygeia Hospital Tirana, added: "In Albania, chronic diseases, heart diseases, brain disorders, diabetes, stroke etc. increase in number year after year. This is caused by the unbalanced diet, stress, change of lifestyle etc. In our country, regular check-ups are rarely performed, and this often leads to the discovery of the disease in an already malignant state. The new science innovation - the umbilical cord stem cells - are specialized to treat these pathologies, and every woman giving birth should very carefully consider their collection and storage, as it can be a life-saver of her child and her family in a further moment. Finally, Albanian people have their own bank, and we warrantee absolute quality and safety of storage."

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