

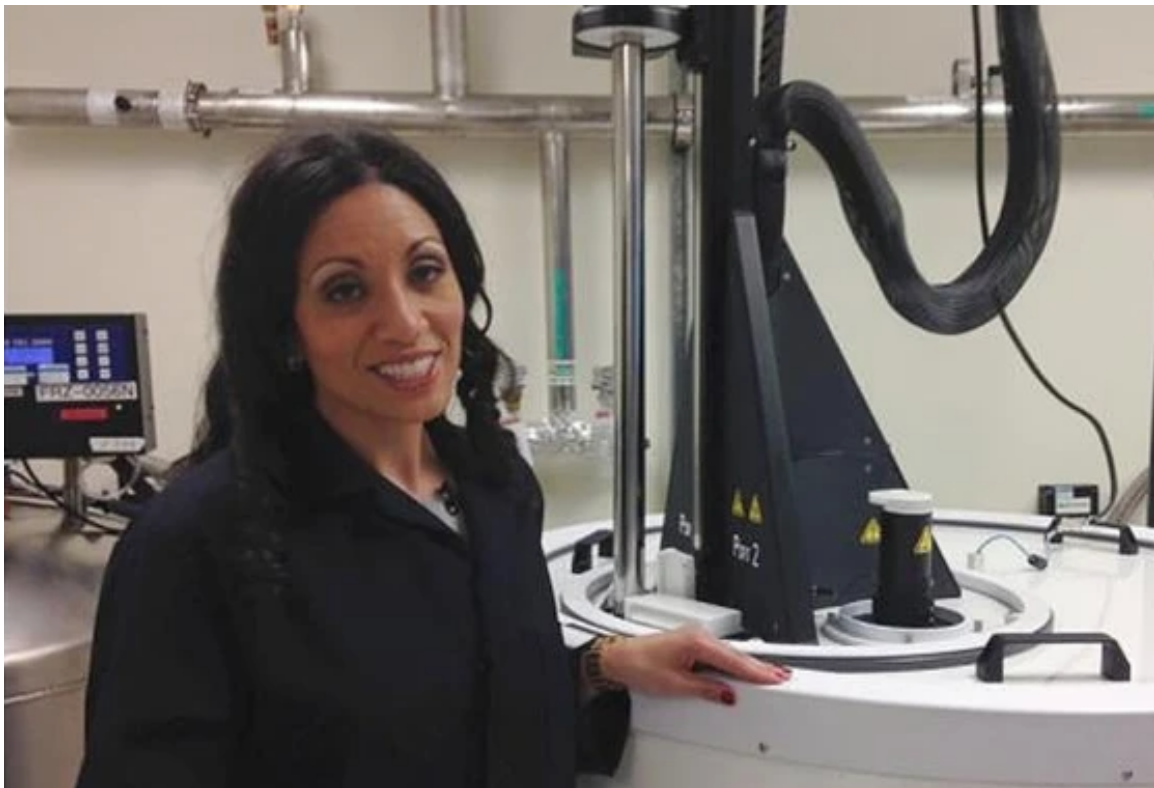
# National cord blood bank names facility after local businessman

*Anonymous blood donors saved Marshall Eliuk's life — twice. So the Peace River businessman showed his appreciation with a \$1.5 million donation to Canadian Blood Services during its "For All Canadians" fundraising campaign. It is the largest single donation the organization has ever received.*

[Sahar Saifee](#) • Edmonton Journal | Published Jul 10, 2015 • 2 minute read

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Heidi Elmoazzen, Canadian Blood Services and Cord Blood Bank director explains how cord blood is stored.



## Article content

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So the Peace River businessman showed his appreciation with a \$1.5 million donation to Canadian Blood Services during its "For All Canadians" fundraising campaign. It is the largest single donation the organization has ever received.

“The first time when I was a young teen I had rheumatic fever and I was short of blood transfusions to bring it down,” said Eliuk in an interview on Friday.

As he got older, Eliuk was diagnosed with aplastic anemia, a blood cell deficiency caused by the failure of bone marrow development.

“I lived off transfusions receiving six bags of blood every three days for nine months,” Eliuk said. “My doctor told me that I would be with her as long as I was receiving blood transfusions.”

At the age of 60, Eliuk was too old to search for a bone marrow match and was told that stem cells from the umbilical cord were much easier to match.

Today, after being treated, Eliuk maintains a normal blood count.

“There are good people that donated blood and non-profit organizations that helped so I thought one day I will have to pay back to the Canadian Blood Services,” he said.

CBS, which officially launched its national public cord-blood bank last month, has named its Edmonton facility after Eliuk. All together, the “For All Canadians” campaign raised over \$12.5 million to support the bank.

Cord blood, once discarded as medical waste, is now used as a simple and safe source of blood-forming stem cells to treat over 80 diseases and disorders like leukemia and lymphoma.

“It’s quite simple for moms to donate their baby’s cord blood because all aspects of the collection and donation actually take place after the healthy delivery of the baby, so there really is no risk to the mother or to the baby,” said blood bank director Heidi Elmoazzen.

At any given time, nearly 1,000 Canadians are in need of stem cell donors while half are left without a match.

The blood bank employs 24 workers and has the capacity to hold 7,500 units of cord blood with each unit costing nearly \$42,000. That is enough for one child or small adult. Larger adults may require two units.

The cord blood labs are located just a few floors above the blood donation centre. The four rooms separated by glass screens are categorized into different sections: the assessing room, processing room, testing unit and the freezing room.

The assessing room transfers the new cord blood to the processing room, where 100 to 200 millilitres of white and red blood cells are separated. The cord blood is then transferred to the testing unit, a room surrounded by hundreds of small containers where the viability of blood cells is determined.

The final wing, which at first glance looks like a factory, is actually a storage room. It is surrounded with 1.5-metre-tall steel storage units filled with liquid nitrogen that stays at a temperature of -196 C to preserve blood, which is then transferred into 25-mL bags.

“Once cord blood is frozen in liquid nitrogen, it can actually be stored indefinitely,” Elmoazzen said.

Edmonton is one of four cities to partner with the Canadian Blood Services to house cord blood banks. The others are Vancouver, Ottawa and Brampton.