

# Netcells Cryogenics

Media statement

Thursday, 9 February 2012

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## **Netcells Cryogenics receives AABB Accreditation**

*First and only stem cell bank in Africa to achieve AABB Accreditation*

Independent South African stem cell bank Netcells Cryogenics recently became Africa's first and only stem cell facility to be awarded certified accreditation by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). This makes Netcells the only bank in Africa to process and store stem cells in accordance with validated international accreditation standards.

Commenting on the announcement Netcells Managing Director, Kim Hulett said: "This is an incredible validation of our operations. Accreditation was a non-negotiable for Netcells, as it provides our clients with unequivocal assurance that stem cells processed by Netcells are in accordance with the highest quality standards ensuring that stem cells released by Netcells will be accepted by transplant centres around the world."

Accreditation follows two years of intensive assessment by AABB assessors. Accreditation is important as it promotes excellence in the field of stem cell therapy around the world and ensures a high level of professional and technical expertise contributing to quality performance and patient safety. While Netcells Cryogenics has been a member of the AABB for three years and has been ready for accreditation for quite some time, a physical inspection and accreditation could only take place once a comprehensive audit trail had been completed.

"The accreditation adds to the exemplary track record of Netcells Cryogenics in that it places us in an entirely different league in terms of quality. Quality and safety are of the utmost importance when processing cells that could one day potentially save a life. Netcells will never compromise on this, despite the considerable financial investment into technology and resources required to achieve and maintain these standards. This is particularly meaningful for the many families who have placed their trust in us over the years," Hulett says.

Stem cell harvesting is an investment in the future as it can afford families with an invaluable lifeline during a health crisis when a child or even an adult has become seriously ill. Prof Nicolas Novitzky, head of haematology at the University of Cape Town and Chairman of the

South African Stem Cell Transplantation Society has recently raised concern that some locally banked cord blood samples, needed for patients requiring transplantation, had been of sub-optimal quality and could therefore not be used.

Netcells Medical Director, Dr Yvonne Holt said that Netcells has never found itself in this situation but that the accreditation of local facilities could go a long way in raising standards and safeguarding against such an eventuality.

“Our formal accreditation attests to the fact that we follow and adhere to the strictest international guidelines and protocols,” she observes.

Dr Holt emphasises that AABB accreditation is not just a general laboratory accreditation. “The accreditation covers the collection, processing and storage of cord blood, which evaluates each and every aspect of our business. It is a voluntary assessment programme, which means that accreditation is undertaken only by those facilities that are truly committed to ongoing improvement, education and quality.”

The AABB said that it welcomed Netcells to a distinguished group of accredited facilities around the world, especially with Netcells being the only accredited facility in Africa. The organisation added that its stringent programme assessed the quality and operational systems in place within a facility. The AABB programme is recognised by the International Society for Quality in Healthcare and the Code of Federal Regulations.

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**Issued by** : **Martina Nicholson Associates (MNA) on behalf of Netcells Cryogenics**  
**Contact** : **Martina Nicholson, Graeme Swinney or Clemmy Eccles**  
**Telephone** : **(011) 469 3016**  
**Email** : **[martina@mnapr.co.za](mailto:martina@mnapr.co.za), [graeme@mnapr.co.za](mailto:graeme@mnapr.co.za) or [clemmy@mnapr.co.za](mailto:clemmy@mnapr.co.za)**