

Groundbreaking study that may change transplant practices

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Researchers from John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center, one of the nation's 50 best cancer centers, played an important role in a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on October 18 that may change the current blood and marrow transplantation practices. The phase 3, multicenter study compared harvesting stem cells from bone marrow rather than blood and suggests there are benefits to both approaches, but no survival differences between the two methods.

Over the past 10 years, 75 percent of [stem cell transplants](#) from unrelated adult donors have used peripheral blood stem cells rather than those harvested from bone marrow without clinical data to support this shift. The study did not find significant survival differences between peripheral-blood stem-cell and [bone marrow transplantation](#) from unrelated donors.

"We did find that peripheral-blood stem cells may reduce the risk of [graft failure](#), whereas bone marrow may reduce the risk of developing chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), a complication that is frequently debilitating," said study author Scott Rowley, M.D., Chief, Blood and Marrow Transplantation at John Theurer Cancer Center.

GVHD is a common complication that can occur after a stem cell or [bone marrow transplant](#) in which the newly transplanted [donor cells](#) attack the transplant recipient's body. This can cause a variety of serious side effects, such as skin rashes, liver problems and diarrhea. Chronic

GVHD usually starts three months after transplant and can last a lifetime. Its symptoms may include chronic pain, dry eyes and mouth, fatigue, skin rash, weight loss.

"As one of the 10 largest blood and marrow transplant programs in the nation, we remain committed to being on the forefront of the latest transplantation research and treatment," said Andrew L. Pecora, M.D., F.A.C.P., C.P.E., Chief Innovations Officer and Professor and Vice President of Cancer Services, John Theurer Cancer Center.

More information: www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1203517

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