

Increasing Collection Volumes Using Economical Consumer Promotion Techniques: The St. Louis Cord Blood Bank Experience

Jonathan Wofford, Drew Schumacher, and Donna Regan
Saint Louis Cord Blood Bank, SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center

Abstract

The St. Louis Cord Blood Bank (SLCBB) operates a public banking model with 29 participating hospitals in Missouri and Illinois and more than 400 volunteer physician and nurse midwife collectors. To date, more than 90,000 units have been collected and approximately 25% of these products have met storage criteria. The primary reason for units not meeting storage criteria is low collection volume (<50mL).

The SLCBB is working to develop new programs aimed at motivating collectors to increase collection volumes as a means to expand and diversify its cord blood inventory while maintaining financial discipline. In 2009, the SLCBB initiated its "Bag a Big One" program.

The program was designed to reward collection teams that were able to meet or exceed target volumes. The SLCBB announced the program by mailing a flyer to participating physician and nurse midwives. Flyers were also sent to the labor and delivery departments of each participating hospital. Rewards were given to participants in a collection that resulted in one of two target volumes: 125-149 mLs and >150 mLs. The reward consisted of \$5 and \$10 gift cards to a local restaurant based on the target volume reached.

When comparing the five months that this program has been in place (10/1/09 – 2/28/10) to the five months prior to its inception, the SLCBB has experienced: a 6% increase in mean collection volume, a 5% increase in units meeting processing criteria, a 23% increase in units added to inventory (893 to 1,101), a 5% decrease in deferrals due to a collection volume <50 mLs, and a 3.4% increase in post processing Total Nucleated Cell count (TNC). These significant results have been achieved at a cost of ~\$4,000.

This study demonstrates that simple, cost-effective incentive based programs can be utilized to increase cord blood collection volumes in a volunteer collection model.

Background

The "Bag a Big One" program was inspired by two events. First, the SLCBB shipped an exceptionally large cord blood unit to a transplant center in South Africa (post processing counts: TNC = 5815×10^6 , CD34 = 49.9×10^6 , and CFU = 115.2×10^6). Shortly thereafter, the SLCBB banked a two-bag cord unit with a volume of 243 mL. After sending thank you notes to the doctor and nurse who collected the unit, the bank's outreach coordinator began studying the feasibility of initiating a formal program to recognize physicians and nurses who collect "super sized" units.

After researching data collection and volume trends, the SLCBB determined that in addition to academic and even poignant education efforts, a simple, effective, and economical promotion could be developed and executed to further motivate participating physicians to increase collection volumes.

The resulting "Bag a Big One" program was designed to encourage the physician/nurse teams to maximize cord blood collections as part of a friendly competition. Potential benefits to this program included:

- Volunteer physician and nurse teams would receive an extrinsic award for their efforts
- Nurses would be recognized individually for their contribution to collections
- Possibility of a corporate partnership with local dining establishments to fund the operation of this program
- Recognition of winners in the bank's *First Gift* magazine could increase awareness, interest, and enthusiasm for the program
- Increased collection volumes and probability of adding quality units to inventory

Materials & Methods

Program Promotion

The program was promoted by a direct informational mailing to all active physicians, delivery of a promotional poster to the labor and delivery units at participating hospitals, and an article in the SLCBB's *First Gift* news magazine (distributed to all participating physicians and collection sites).

Award Structure

Level 1: \$5 gift card to a local restaurant for physicians and nurses who collect a cord unit that is 2-1/2 times minimum bankable volume (124-149 mLs).

Level 2: \$10 gift card to a local restaurant for physicians and nurses who collect a unit that is 3 times minimum bankable volume (>150 mLs).

Eligibility

Those eligible for an award included: the delivering physician or nurse midwife and nurses who are part of the labor and delivery team.

Rules

Program rules included:

- Only one award per person per winning cord blood unit
- Up to 5 different nurses can receive an award for a winning cord blood unit
- Cord blood units had to meet all specifications for processing and cryo-storage
- All labeling had to be accurate and complete and signatures legible

Bag a big one, and we'll buy lunch.

You're doing a great job collecting cord blood for us. Why not collect a few bunch at the same time? During our "Bag a Big One" promotion, every time you bank a giant cord unit, lunch is on us.

Starting October 1, for every giant cord unit you collect that qualifies to be banked, you'll win a Gift Certificate that's good at any Subway restaurant. Use them yourself, or treat your friends and family. You'll be here! Lunch!

This promotion only runs until December 31. So bag a whole bunch of big cord units, and eat for free!

Two Ways to Win

Level 1
Winners receive a \$5.00 gift certificate for a bankable cord unit with a volume between 125 mL and 149 mL.

Level 2
Winners receive a \$10.00 gift certificate for a bankable cord unit with a volume of 150 mL or higher.

Who's Eligible
The delivering nurse or nurse midwife
The nurse who:
• Welcomes the patient
• Collects maternal samples
• Completes the L&D data form
• Witnesses the consent
• Signs the bag label

Rules

- Only one award per person per winning cord blood unit.
- Up to 5 different nurses can receive an award for a winning cord blood unit.
- Signatures must be legible. (If we can't read the name, we can't make an award.)
- Cord blood units must meet all specifications for processing and cryo-storage.
- All labeling must be accurate and complete.

St. Louis Cord Blood Bank
The First Gift
3642 Park Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri 63118
314.268.2700 x 6142
www.slcbb.org

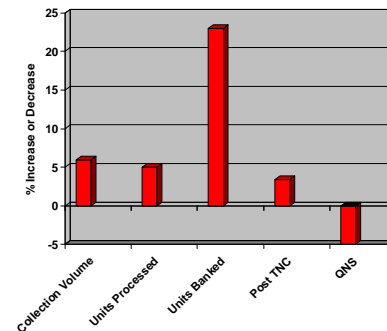
THE FIRST GIFT.

Dedicated to all who participate in cord blood collection.



St. Louis Cord Blood Bank
1811 2009

Results



When comparing the five months that this program has been in place (10/1/09 – 2/28/10) to the five months prior to its inception, the SLCBB has experienced:

- 6% Increase in mean collection volumes
- 5% increase in units meeting processing criteria
- 23% increase in units added to inventory
- 3.4% increase in post processing TNC
- 5% decrease in deferrals due to a collection volume <50 mLs (QNS)

Discussion

- This promotion was designed to recognize and encourage compliance with all aspects of the collection process: maternal sample collection, labeling, signatory, and form completion. In this way, performance of all participants who support collection, not just the OB / midwife collectors, are acknowledged.
- The SLCBB is careful to not incentivize medical professionals to the extent that they might be encouraged to alter their delivery practices.
- This study demonstrates that simple, cost-effective incentive based programs can be utilized to increase cord blood collection volumes in a volunteer collection model