SICKLE CELL 101

The Basics of Sickle Cell

Sickle cell is one of the most common genetic disorder in the world. Frequency of sickle cell in other parts of the world can be as high as 25% percent.

Sickle cell is a genetic disorder meaning it is passed down from parent to child.

The sickle cell gene evolved to combat a deadly strain of malaria. Those who have sickle cell trait have increased resistance to malaria.

Only one sickle cell gene is present in individuals with sickle cell trait.

Complications can occur in any part of the body, because sickle cell is a blood disorder.

If both parents have sickle cell trait, there is a 25% chance of having a child with sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell is a blood disorder characterized by rigid, sticky, fragile, and crescent (or sickle) shaped red blood cells.

Common complications associated with sickle cell disease are: infections, anemia, and pain crisis. Severe complications include stroke, pneumonia, acute chest syndrome, and organ damage.

Vaso-occlusive crises (or pain crisis) occurs when sickle shaped red blood cells get stuck within blood vessels due to their shape and stickiness.

This slows or stops blood flow, which damages surrounding body tissue and can cause extreme pain, often resulting in hospitalization.

There are a limited number of ways to manage sickle cell disease. Options include blood transfusions, FDA approved hydroxyurea and endari, and pain management.

There is currently no universal cure for sickle cell disease.

Bone marrow transplant (stem cell transplant) is currently available and there are many investigational therapies currently being researched.

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