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The success rate of leukaemia treatments could receive a massive boost after a charity came forward to support world-class research at Nottingham Trent University. The James Skillington Challenge – founded by a Nottingham couple following the death of their son from the disease – has given funding to help university scientists develop a method to ensure patients receive more suitable transplants. Currently half of bone marrow or cord blood transplants in Leukaemia fail because they aren't an appropriate match.

Experts from the university's John van Geest Cancer Research Centre are trying to find a way to help patients receive a transplant of bone marrow or cord blood which is much more likely to result in successful treatment.

Using samples taken from the Anthony Nolan Trust Cord Blood Bank, - also based at Nottingham Trent University's Clifton campus – as well as data and blood plasma samples from the Barcelona Cord Blood Bank, the scientists will use a process known as 'biomarker detection' to identify the features of transplant samples that are known to have been successful in treating leukaemia sufferers.

Tony and Susan Skillington, who founded the charity in 2002 after the death of 22-year-old James, have given the university £5,000 to help fund the research. Susan Skillington will present Professor Bob Rees from the John van Geest Cancer Research Centre, with a cheque on Thursday, February 11.

Professor Rees said: "Our work and expertise in this area is really quite advanced and the donation from the James Skillington Challenge will help us work towards developing a solution that will hopefully have an international impact in saving the lives of leukaemia sufferers. We're also extremely lucky to enjoy such a strong relationship with the Anthony Nolan Trust and the Barcelona Cord Blood Bank, both of whom are at the forefront of bone marrow and cord blood transplantation."

Susan Skillington said: "We're very pleased to be making this contribution to the work being carried out at Nottingham Trent University. Important and innovative research into

leukaemia treatment and therapy such as this is vital, so we're wishing the scientists here every success in what they're doing."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The James Skillington Challenge was formed by Tony and Susan Skillington following the death of their son James, just one year after he was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia. Since forming the charity, the couple – who live in Ravenshead in Nottingham – have worked with a small group of friends to raise money and make donations in James' memory, to help fund research and support for the treatment of leukaemia sufferers.

Nottingham Trent University's School of Science and Technology has developed a strong reputation for excellence in cancer research over recent years. In 2009 the university received almost £8 million of funding from the John and Lucille van Geest Foundation with which to develop a dedicated cancer research centre at the Clifton Campus. In 2008 it became home to the Anthony Nolan Trust's Cord Blood Bank, the only facility of its kind in the UK, outside of London.

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