



For Immediate Release

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International Marrow Donor Registries Reach 25 Million Potential Donors, Give Hope to Searching Blood Cancer Patients Around the World

The record number of volunteer potential marrow donors is announced during the 41st EBMT Annual Meeting in Istanbul, in collaboration with several international organizations.

Istanbul — March 23, 2015—Bone Marrow Donors Worldwide (BMDW) and the World Marrow Donor Association (WMDA) is announcing that a record 25 million people worldwide are currently listed as potential volunteer marrow donors in hopes of saving the lives of those battling life-threatening blood cancers and diseases. The significant milestone gives greater hope to searching patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals around the world.

BMDW was created in 1989 as a collaborative effort of eight countries and has grown to a community of 53 countries that are working together to achieve a centralized file of all potential volunteer marrow donors worldwide. This resource is crucial for patients in need of a blood stem cell transplant, because in nearly 50 percent of blood stem cell transplants, the donor and the patient come from different countries.

BMDW works closely with the WMDA—an association responsible for establishing consistent, high-quality standards for worldwide marrow donor registries—and provides a comprehensive list of potential marrow donors and donated umbilical cord blood units, primarily from WMDA member registries and cord blood banks. The BMDW global database is easily accessible to physicians to search on behalf of their patients in need of a blood stem cell transplant.

Professor Dr. Jon J. van Rood, founder of BMDW, said, “Today we celebrate a remarkable 25 million potential marrow donors on worldwide registries. Thanks to these 25 million potential volunteer donors, 250,000 patients have found their match and received an unrelated marrow transplant. But our work is not done. We need more potential donors to join registries around the world, as an equal number of patients have searched for a donor and could not find one.”

Every year, thousands of people are diagnosed with a blood cancer. A marrow or cord blood transplant is a potentially life-saving treatment for more than 70 different diseases, including leukemia, lymphoma and sickle cell disease. Other diseases include aplastic anemia, myelodysplastic syndrome, inherited immune deficiency disorders and inherited metabolic disorders.

Michael Boo, J.D., president of WMDA, was thrilled to announce the milestone. "We are so grateful for the millions of people around the world who have volunteered to be the cure. Every person who has joined a marrow donor registry moves us closer to finding a marrow donor for every patient in need," said Boo. "Our goal as a global community is to continue to grow this inventory of donors and cord blood units by adding more than one million potential volunteer marrow donors and cord blood units from an increasing number of countries each year," continued Michael Boo.

Professor Mohamad Mohty from the Saint-Antoine Hospital in Paris and President of the EBMT underlines: "Two years after the celebration of the millionth transplants, we are celebrating another important milestone of 25 million donors in the global donor registry. The willingness of voluntary marrow or stem cell donors worldwide and the commitment and collaboration of international Blood and Marrow Transplantation organisations will contribute to improve the outcomes for patients who are suffering from blood cancer".

The importance of adding more potential marrow donors and cord blood units to the worldwide registries is underscored by the constantly increasing use of transplants as a treatment for a wider range of diseases. An exponential rise in all types of blood stem cell transplants, particularly from unrelated donors, has occurred since the first successful unrelated transplant in 1973. U.K.-based Anthony Nolan, the world's first marrow donor registry, began recruiting potential volunteer marrow donors in 1974. Today, unrelated transplants are often as successful as those that use sibling donors.

The BMDW global database provides a unique service to transplant centers and registries searching on behalf of patients from around the world who are trying to find the best match for patients in need of a life-saving blood stem cell or marrow transplant and who do not have a matching sibling. By providing a single registry for listing all available adult volunteer marrow donors and cord blood units, it provides a quick and thorough search service, reporting on whether and where a good match can be found. In 2014, over 225,000 search requests were made for patients in need of a blood stem cell transplant.

About BMDW

To find the best matched donor for a patient, the first step is to look into BMDW, the global database, where all potential donors and cord blood units are listed. The database is available for physicians who can quickly look and determine within a few minutes if there is chance for a match for their patients.

BMDW is operated by Europdonor Foundation, a Dutch nonprofit organization. For more information, visit: www.bmdw.org.

About WMDA

Worldwide, over 50,000 patients per year are looking for a matched donor outside their family. Nearly 50% of the patients that find a donor find his or her perfectly matched donor in another country. WMDA works towards a global standardization by establishing an accreditation programme for registries. The accreditation programme ensures that organisations protect the welfare of the donors and high-quality stem cells for patients worldwide.

WMDA is an international association. To learn more, visit: www.wmda.info.

About the EBMT

The EBMT is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1974 in order to allow scientists and physicians involved in clinical bone marrow transplantation to share their experience and develop co-operative studies. The EBMT aims to promote all aspects associated with the transplantation of haematopoietic stem cells from all donor sources and donor types including basic and clinical research, education, standardisation, quality control, and accreditation for transplant procedures.

The EBMT organises every year an Annual Meeting at the end of March. It brings together over 4,500 scientists, physicians, nurses, statisticians, data managers, biologists, technicians and patients and remains an important moment to ensure and encourage exchange, education and scientific productivity in order to improve upon what has been built over the years.

For further information about the EBMT, please visit the website: www.ebmt.org and follow us on Twitter: @TheEBMT and #EBMT15

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