

## STEM CELL PROGRAM

Recently one of my dear friends had the misfortune to develop a highly aggressive type of leukemia. Without a stem cell transplant she will surely die. She is waiting for a donor. I was not aware of the program that is responsible for coordinating this transfer. My hope is that today we will let more people know about this program and the opportunity to save a life.

ONEMATCH Stem Cell and Marrow Network is an organization that finds and matches volunteer donors to patients **who** require stem cell transplants. **Less than** 25% of those needing a transplant can be matched with family members. One Match has access to 23 million donors in more than 70 registries around the world.

Stem cells are an immature cell that can become red cells, white cells or platelets. They are used for people with leukemia, aplastic anemia, immune disorders and metabolic disorders.

Stem cells from donors are matched not only **by** blood type but also **by** HLA Human Leukocyte antigens. **Up** to 12 antigens are matched so you can imagine how complex this can be.

OneMatch focuses mainly on male donors between 17 and 35 years of age who are in good health.

Should you wish to become a donor, you register on line at Canadian Blood Services [www. Blood.ca](http://www.blood.ca) . This requires you to provide a personal profile and a health assessment questionnaire. After reading about and consenting to the procedure, you are sent a kit to take a swab from your mouth, with advice about how to collect the specimen and where to return it.

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If you are selected you will be contacted by a nurse and complete a health questionnaire, have a physical examination and may need xrays and blood work to rule out infectious diseases.

Once you are matched, you will receive injections for 4-5 days to increase the number of stem cells. *Granulocyte colony stimulating factor* is a growth factor that can make the stem cells move from the bone marrow to the blood. It is given subcutaneously once daily. It is usually well tolerated, with headache, loss of appetite, redness at the injection site, and bone pain being the more common reactions. Occasionally rash, fever, weakness, fatigue and enlarged spleen. These are more common in those using it for support during chemotherapy than a healthy young volunteer using it for improving the effectiveness of stem cell donation.

Blood is collected from the donor and passed through a machine that removes the stem cells, the rest of the blood is returned to the donor. This takes about four hours. Some donate cells from bone marrow for stem cell donation.

IF this appeals to you as something you would like to do to SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE you can phone 1—888-236-6283. Or register on line at Canadian Blood Services, [www.blood.ca](http://www.blood.ca)