



Athletic Trainers 4 Be The Match

Be The Match and athletic trainers work together to increase the number of minority donors in national registry

BY JORDAN GRANTHAM

As part of the NATA Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee's mission to identify and address issues relevant to the ethnically diverse populations to better serve the needs of the patients served by athletic trainers, the committee is supporting Athletic Trainers 4 Be The Match by hosting donor drives at the state, district and national level throughout 2018.

What is Be The Match?

For the thousands of people diagnosed every year with life-threatening blood cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma, a cure exists. Someone is diagnosed with a blood cancer every three minutes, and every year 14,000 patients with blood cancer need a marrow transplant to live. Over the past 25 years, Be The Match, operated by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), has managed the largest and most diverse marrow registry in the world.

What is the disparity for the minority population?

Be The Match reports that 70 percent of its donor registry is Caucasian, which means Caucasian patients find a donor 93 percent of the time. On the other hand, patients who are ethnically diverse find a donor less than 60 percent of the time. Those with diverse ancestry are especially needed on the registry because they are most likely to match someone who shares their heritage.

How did the Athletic Trainers 4 Be The Match initiative get started and what impact has it had so far?

When they realized athletic trainers work with a diverse patient population and could

potentially make a positive impact on the Be The Match registry, three ATs collaborated to start Athletic Trainers 4 Be The Match. It started as a challenge between Phil Page, PhD, ATC, PT, and Ray Castle, PhD, ATC, LAT, of Louisiana State University, and Jim Mensch, PhD, ATC, at the University of South Carolina to see which school could gather the most new donors, and the initiative grew to include other schools from there.

To date, the Athletic Trainers 4 Be The Match initiative has added 2,330 people to the national donor registry. Two of those registrants have been matched with people in need and were able to help save lives.

What is the commitment when signing up for the registry? What happens next?

Signing up to be included in the Be The Match donor registry is as simple as a cheek swab and filling out a form. Once you're on the registry, you would receive a call if you are a possible match for someone. Your chances of being called are 1 in 430. You must be between 18 and 44 years old to be added to the registry.

If your cheek swab and form indicates you may be a match for someone, you would then need to do a blood test to make sure you are the right match. If the blood test indicates you're a match, you would then be asked to donate to a person in need.

There are two types of donations needed. The most common (75 percent) is by donating blood stem cells through apheresis. After five days of taking injections of Filgrastim to increase your blood stem cells, your blood is removed through a needle in one arm and passed through a machine that will collect only the blood-forming cells.

The remaining blood is returned to you through a needle in the other arm. It's similar to donating blood platelets.

The other type of donation is giving bone marrow. A bone marrow donation is a surgical procedure that takes place in a hospital operating room. Doctors use needles to withdraw liquid marrow (where the body's blood-forming cells are made) from both sides of the back of your pelvic bone. You will be given anesthesia and feel no pain during the donation. After donation, your liquid marrow is transported to the patient's location for transplant. The typical hospital stay for marrow donation is early morning to late afternoon, and occasionally overnight for observation.

How can you get involved?

There are three easy ways to support the cause in 2018. First, you can simply sign up to join the donor registry online at **join.bethematch.org/NATA**.

EDAC members are working with Be The Match in 2018, aiming to host a donor drive at each district meeting. The effort kicked off at the EATA Meeting in January, and 12 more donors were added to the national registry. EDAC will also host a donor drive at its Town Hall & Social during NATA 2018 in New Orleans. EDAC added 33 donors to the national registry during its 2017 donor drive in Houston and hopes to beat that number in 2018.

You can also host your own donor event at your school. It's a very simple process, and Be The Match will provide everything you need. If you're interested in hosting an event, contact Ashley Collier at **acollier@nmdp.org** or 803.543.9034. \$