

Please help us save our son's life

By [Polly Rippon](#) 28 January 2008

GORGEOUS toddler David Carroll is a picture of happiness as he plays with his mum and dad at their Derbyshire home. But behind the smiles his parents Thomas and Alison face an agonising wait to find the bone marrow donor who could save their little boy's life.

Three-year-old David suffers from a rare bone marrow condition which means he might not see his 10th birthday if a donor is not found.

At best, David, who was diagnosed with Fanconi Anaemia nine months ago, has a 10 per cent chance of developing leukaemia and at worst his bone marrow could fail.

Now his father Thomas Carroll, a consultant neurosurgeon at Sheffield's Royal Hallamshire Hospital, has rallied his bosses to hold an information and registration event run by the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust so members of the public can find out more about joining the donor register.

The hospital is already a centre of excellence for bone marrow donation.

He said: "When David was diagnosed we felt devastation. To be told something like this about your child is very hard. Until last year we were a normal family - now we are sitting on a ticking time bomb.

"We have had to come to terms with it but it was certainly pretty devastating at the time.

"Obviously we would like to find a donor who is perfect match for David but there is also a desire to have something good to come out of something difficult and challenging."

Previously donating was an awkward process which saw the marrow sucked out of the hip bone under general anaesthetic.

But a simpler, less painful technique has since been devised which involves being hooked up to a machine for a few hours so stem cells can be removed from the blood, in a process similar to that of giving blood.

And only 10 per cent of people who sign up to the register ever become donors.

Thomas, who lives with Alison, David and daughter Katie, aged 18 months, on the banks of Ladybower Reservoir, near Bamford, Derbyshire, will donate his own bone marrow to his son if necessary. Every parent is a 50 per cent match with their child - but the chances of David surviving are just 30 to 40 per cent and a perfect match would give him odds of



Agonising wait: Alison and Thomas Carroll with their son David Picture: Roger Nadal

70 to 80 per cent.

Thomas said: "The clinic will obviously increase the odds of finding a match for David but it also makes us feel that we are doing something useful to help others in the same situation.

"A year ago we would have felt it was an unfortunate situation for someone else but it wouldn't have borne any relation to our life - know we know anybody can be affected."

He added: "David doesn't know that he is ill but he knows he goes for lots of 'check ups'. He has a blood test every couple of months and each time we are hoping to be told it's not leukaemia.

"He goes to pre-school and does all the normal things - he plays in the garden, gets up to mischief and he's very smart - but he has got a clock ticking inside him and at some point we will have to explain what the issues are."