

An 'Ah Tiong' saved my daughter's life

S'PORE DAD DISTURBED BY RUDE REACTION TO CHINA STUDENT'S APPEAL:

She, too, had leukaemia and is alive because of China stranger's bone marrow

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IT was a stranger from China who donated bone marrow and saved his daughter's life.

Yet, in Singapore, some are saying we should not help non-Singaporeans in need.

That is why finance director Clement Lim, 52, a Singaporean, is upset with the views of these netizens, who objected to a recent drive to help a leukaemia patient.

The New Paper reported yesterday that an informal online poll on a local forum showed that close to 80 per cent of the 120 forum users did not want to donate money to help 18-year-old Li Bingbing.

The scholar from China has been diagnosed with blood cancer.

The National Technological University's student union had started the donation drive to help the first-year student. A mass e-mail with details was circulated.

On online forums discussing the e-mail, further derogatory comments were also posted regarding Chinese nationals.

Mr Lim's daughter, Miss Sarah Lim, 22, was diagnosed with leukaemia in early 2006, two days before Chinese New Year that year.

Mr Lim told The New Paper that it was a foreigner who came to her rescue.

He said: 'All the money in the world could not save my daughter. Only the selfless willingness of a total stranger could, and did.'

He said the donor had not asked for money.

Sarah said her Chinese donor has given her a new lease of life.

She has returned to the University of Melbourne to complete her honours degree in literature, which she had to delay because of her illness.

In an e-mail to The New Paper, she said she was 'disgusted with the response of various netizens'.

'Perhaps their ignorance to the urgency of receiving treatment could be a key reason behind their callous comments, but their petty selfishness is what really sets my teeth on edge.



Mr Clement Lim says he is disappointed over the opposition by netizens to the donation drive for leukaemia patient Li Bingbing. Picture: KELVIN CHNG

'I am glad that my bone marrow donor from China - who only has a list of stats to recognise me - chose to give me a second chance at life.'

Her father was moved to write to The New Paper yesterday after he read our report.

'BEYOND NATIONALITY'

When interviewed, he said that some things went beyond nationality, and it was 'quite sad' that people thought that way about helping a foreign student.

Mr Lim said: 'If not for the bone marrow donated by a man from China, who such netizens would deride (by calling him) Ah Tiong, my daughter would not be alive today.'

'He could easily have said he would donate only to a fellowman in China, but he decided to save a life.'

'We benefited from the selfless act of one man in China.'

Mr Lim felt that even if those netizens did not want to donate, they should not have condemned the donation drive.

'They may be disgruntled, but to deny someone an opportunity to life reflects badly on themselves.'

'Such reactions are very revealing of the heart of the person,' he said.

His daughter agreed.

Sarah said: 'Having had a serious case of leukaemia before, I instantly sympathised with Li Bingbing.'

'I felt very bad that people were saying these things about him. At this stage, his life could be in the balance.'

She said that she was surprised that people had said such things, especially as Singapore often offers help for disaster-hit areas in the region.

She urged the netizens to put themselves in the shoes of the patient.

She pointed out that Bingbing's status as a scholarship student means that, as a foreigner, he would receive no subsidy for his ongoing treatments.

SCHOLARSHIP PUZZLE

Sarah also wondered why others picked on him for taxing Singapore's resources as an overseas scholar.

'I wish these netizens would not be so quick to spit and bare their claws when someone overseas is granted a scholarship to study in a (Singapore) university.'

'I very much doubt that if they were granted a scholarship to study overseas, they would mull over how they are a cost to that country's economy.'

'Instead, they would probably rejoice over such an opportunity.'

Both father and daughter were quick to acknowledge that a donation is an individual decision and said they 'would not condemn people who refuse to donate'.

However, she added: 'I am disheartened to realise that altruism, according to (these netizens) can only be extended to people of a certain tribe, clan or country.'

'I can only wish Li Bingbing a speedy recovery and hope that the venom in those netizens' statements never reach his ears and that the kindness shown by other Singaporeans will warm his heart.'

As for Mr Lim, the dark days two years ago when hope was nearly gone is something he is unlikely to forget.

He said their troubles started after his daughter had complained of headaches and had a fever.

A blood test at the Singapore General Hospital revealed that she had leukaemia.

The hospital arranged to help her find a bone marrow match under the Bone Marrow Donor Programme.

MARROW FROM CHINA

After an agonising six months, a match was found in China - much to the family's relief.

A successful transplant was performed in September, after the bone marrow was flown to Singapore from a medical centre in China.

Sarah went through four rounds of chemotherapy between her diagnosis and the transplant.

Her parents bore the cost of the transplant, including hospitalisation, harvesting the marrow and transporting it to Singapore.

The fees came up to \$57,000 after Medisave subsidies and insurance payments.

They also enjoyed massive support from their church groups.

While the bone marrow donation process does not allow donor and patient to meet, Sarah thinks she knows who her 'saviour' is.

A family friend had noticed a report in a Chinese newspaper about a man from Guangzhou who had donated his bone marrow to 'a 21-year-old Singaporean girl suffering from leukaemia'.

From the coincidences, the family deduced that Mr Li An, 29, may have been the donor.

The family plans to invite him to Singapore after Sarah completes her university education in Australia, to 'properly thank him'.