

Chinese marrow donors hit a record 700,000

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BEIJING, Dec. 20 (Xinhua) -- The China Marrow Donor Program (CMDP) has hit a record 700,000, meaning that more than 60 percent of those suffering blood disease can successfully find data that matches their own disease in the initial stages.

CMDP director Hong Junling attributed the rise to Chinese people's deeper understanding of marrow donation and increasing support from the government in recent years.



Kelly, a girl cured by means of marrow transplant, attend a celebration of the Data Bank of Chinese Hematopoietic Stem Cell Donors in Beijing, China, Dec. 20, 2007. Registered donors of the data bank hit 700,000 according to the Red Cross Society of China on Thursday in Beijing. (Xinhua Photo)

Last year, the number of marrow donors was 580,000, up from 336,500 in 2005. The program was launched in 2001.

"The CMDP plans to increase the data bank number to about one million by 2010, which means over 80 percent of Chinese patients with blood diseases may have the chance to find a matching bone marrow to save their lives," Hong said.

The program, also known as the Data Bank of Chinese Hematopoietic Stem Cell Donors, aimed to help millions of Chinese with blood diseases.

Up to now, more than 800 donors had volunteered to give hematopoietic stem cells to the CMDP for transplant after matching human leucocyte antigens (HLA).



Kelly(L), a patient recovered by means of marrow transplant, exchange presents with Wang Lin (R1) who donated his marrow to Kelly twice during a celebration of the Data Bank of Chinese Hematopoietic Stem Cell Donors in Beijing, China, Dec. 20, 2007. (Xinhua Photo)

The CMDP was also helping overseas patients, Hong said. The data bank had helped 34 patients abroad to find compatible hematopoietic stem cells. The patients came from countries or regions that included the United States, Britain, Switzerland, Singapore, Afghanistan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Stem cell transplants have proved effective in treating blood diseases such as sickle-cell anemia, leukemia and other disorders. Matching of a donor and a recipient for HLA was pivotal for the success of blood stem cell transplants.

So far, the CMDP had established branch marrow banks in 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions around the country. It also had 25 HLA laboratories, three high-resolution laboratories and a quality control laboratory.

Experts said matching bone marrow was very difficult among people with no blood relationship. Therefore, the more data the marrow bank had, the more lives it could save.

According to the CMDP, China currently has more than four million leukemia patients with the rate increasing at around 30,000 annually. Almost one million people were waiting for matching hematopoietic stem cells.

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