

Adopted Chinese Girl Meets Marrow Donor

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BEIJING (AP) — An adopted American girl who had been dying from bone marrow failure but survived after a transplant finally met her donor in an emotional ceremony Thursday in her homeland of China.



Kailee Wells, a 10-year-old girl who survived aplastic anemia thanks to a successful bone marrow transplant last year, holds a calendar presented to her by donor Wang Lin (R), a doctor from a Zhejiang Hospital December 20, 2007. [China Daily]

Ten-year-old Kailee Wells presented a tearful Wang Lin with a picture frame inscribed with the words: "You are my hero. I will love you forever."

Wang swept Kailee up in a big hug when they met at the event organized by the Red Cross Society of China.

"To see her standing before me, I feel so moved, so happy," said Wang, 30, a doctor from the eastern city of Hangzhou. "The fact that we could be matched among this sea of people is a matter of fate."

The bespectacled Kailee, wearing a maroon dress with white lace, stood shyly by and held Wang's hand.

Born in the central province of Hunan, Kailee was found abandoned on the steps of a training institute for teachers in the city of Changde. She spent a year in an orphanage before being adopted by Owen and Linda Wells.

Just after turning 5, she fell ill with aplastic anemia, in which the bone marrow stops producing blood platelets and red and white blood cells.

After a desperate and unsuccessful search on global marrow donor bases, Mrs. Wells came to China in 2003 in hopes of finding a match, preferably from a sibling. But none was found.

In 2005, amid a donor pool that had expanded to about 300,000 people, Wang — who himself has a young son — was found as a suitable candidate.

After one unsuccessful transplant with cells that were not a perfect match, Kailee had her second in 2005 with Wang's bone marrow, but her blood counts decreased.

In February, she had a third transplant — which her mother said was her last chance — and it was successful.

At Thursday's ceremony, Wang gave Kailee a calendar with photos of his family.

When asked how she felt about meeting her benefactor, Kailee said one word: "Pleasure."

Owen Wells told Wang he was "Kailee's special daddy" as he shook hands with him.

Kailee and her family, who live in Milwaukee, Wis., say they will be spending Christmas in China and want to help recruit marrow donors. They will also make a trip to Hunan to meet orphans.

The number of China's bone marrow donors on the registry has grown from tens of thousands in 2003 to 700,000 today, thanks to increased understanding of the procedure by Chinese.

"More people need to have basic knowledge of it. Now they feel horror when they hear about marrow donation," said Hong Junling, director of the Red Cross Society's blood and stem cell program. "They need to know there's no harm to their health."