

Boy Looking For Hero To Save Him From Rare Disease

10-Year-Old Has Rare Anemia That Requires Bone Marrow Transplant

CHICAGO (CBS) — A young child's future looks bleak unless he gets a life-saving treatment. Ismael Mendez suffers from a rare form of anemia and could die without a bone marrow transplant from someone who is not a relative.

As CBS 2's Rafael Romo reports, the boy and his family are hoping a hero will come forward.



Ismael Mendez, 10, is hoping a hero will be found to offer him a life-saving bone marrow transplant.

Ismael talks like any other 10-year-old boy until you start asking him about his health. The fifth-grader is surprisingly familiar with words like diagnosis, anemia and bone marrow.

"I would really like to live," said the young patient. "I am 10 years old and I am a server of God."

Ismael was diagnosed a month ago with Fanconi anemia, an extremely rare and life-threatening disease that can only be cured with a bone marrow transplant.

"My son, he feels, like, tired and nervous," said the boy's father, Ismael Mendez.

He was feeling well Wednesday thanks to a recent blood transfusion.

"We really need to find a donor as soon as possible," said the boy's cousin Maria Flores. "It's urgent 'cause his disease could lead to leukemia or aplastic anemia, which is a failure of bone marrow."

Fanconi Anemia is so rare that there are only about 1,000 cases reported in the whole world. The cure is a bone marrow transplant, but there aren't enough registered donors.

The family is getting help from Life Source, a not-for-profit organization that is trying to find a bone marrow donor for the boy.

"It is our job to help Ismael look for that miracle here, his bone marrow match, which is a one-in-a-million chance that he can find someone compatible with him," said Life Source representative Julie Santos.

"I would really like to live and I wish one of you could be a hero for me and other kids," Ismael said.

When asked what he wants for Christmas, Ismael says he doesn't care about toys; all he wants is his health back.