

## It just takes 1 person to save her life: Dad

**Bone marrow needed for part-Filipina child**

**Clare Ogilvie, The Province**

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Like any nine-year-old, Lourdess Sumners loves to play, read and draw.

But those cherished activities are a memory for now as she battles for her life against a rare form of cancer.

Her best chance is a bone-marrow transplant, but the donor must be found in the next four months if Lourdess is to live.

"It just takes one person," said dad Orlando, struggling to stay strong for Lourdess, wife Ping and seven-year-old Georgette. "She is the most wonderful bright, intelligent person and she deserves a chance. She is kind and she touches everyone who knows her."



Lourdess Sumners, 9, has a rare aggressive form of leukemia.

Photograph by : Jason Payne, The Province

None of Lourdess's family is a match. Lourdess is part Caucasian and part Filipina. The family is hoping to find a donor from the Asian or Filipino community.

But less than three per cent of registered bone-marrow donors are of South-Asian descent. Canadian Blood Services launched a pilot project in B.C. that allows people to use cheek-swab kits to register as a bone-marrow donor. (Go to [www.onematch.ca](http://www.onematch.ca)).

It's hoped the move will help increase the number of people from diverse ethnic groups who register as donors.

Lourdess was first diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) in 2006. She received an aggressive cocktail of chemotherapy and, after several months, was declared to be in remission.

But a few weeks ago, blood tests showed that the cancer had returned.

"It was devastating," said Sumners. "She obviously didn't want to go through it all again, lose her hair and everything, but she trusts us and she has a really good attitude, so we are back here now."

The family has closed its business in Duncan, taken out a second mortgage on their home and moved to Vancouver to be together during Lourdess's fight.

"She is rambunctious and resilient," said oncologist Dr. John Wu, who is treating Lourdess at Children's Hospital in Vancouver.

"It was such a devastation that they went through the first time and having it come back a year later is horrendous. But they are dealing with this the best that they can."

The family is not alone in their fight. The B.C.-based Lifeline Society, which was founded to increase the number of Asian donors in Canada's national Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry, is planning to include Lourdess's plight in its next newsletter.

"What we can do is call the Filipino community here, and the Filipino newspapers to help," said Vicky Go of the Lifeline Society, noting it's is a challenge to get donors.