

Why giving your bone marrow isn't difficult or painful

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A MACCLESFIELD man who is squeamish about giving blood has given the gift of life to a stranger – by donating some of his bone marrow.

Paul Murphy, a software engineer at Cheshire Building Society, joined the Anthony Nolan Trust Register at a recruitment clinic hosted by the Cheshire at its head office on Castle Street.

The 29-year-old completed a medical form and provided a small sample of blood, which was then tissue-typed and stored on the Anthony Nolan Register, the database of UK potential donors which is searched every time any patient in the world needs a bone marrow transplant.

He said: “I had a cousin who died of cancer when I was 15, but that was not something that entered my head, it was something that I had to do as it’s a worthwhile cause which can save lives.”

He received a letter from the trust and was asked to give more blood samples.

Paul said: “I was told that I was possibly a suitable match for someone but further tests were required to make absolutely certain. The charity made arrangements for me to travel to London for a medical to check that I was fit and healthy.”

There are now two ways for the bone marrow to be collected.

A new system allows the stem cells to be collected from the peripheral blood and the donor is treated as an outpatient.

The more traditional ‘harvest’ takes place under general anaesthetic and lasts about an hour.

The bone marrow is extracted from the pelvic bones by sterile needle and syringe.

Paul said: “I’ve always been a bit squeamish about giving blood so decided that the harvest method was best as I would be out for the count!

“I had some bruising at the base of my spine, but that was all.

“Donating bone marrow is not a difficult or painful experience and any discomfort that I felt was far outweighed by the knowledge that I was helping to save a life. The sense of achievement and overall reward is fantastic.”

The Anthony Nolan Trust made the arrangements required for Paul’s donation and the Cheshire allowed Paul, who has worked for them for seven years, to have the recommended two weeks off to recover.

For ethical reasons, donors are given very little information about the recipient, but can ask for regular updates through the trust.

Paul said: “All I have been told is that my recipient is an adult male. The charity will ask for updates on his progress, but I am happy to just know that I have been able to help.”

The trust said that it is desperate for more young men like Paul to join the register as only 11 per cent of the register currently consists of young men aged between 18 and 35.

To join the register, donors must be aged between 18 and 40 and in good health.