



12 September 2007

Happy Anniversary – A Gift of Life

On Saturday September 22, Mary and David Gate from Bedminster, Bristol mark their thirteenth wedding anniversary, and they are asking the public to celebrate with them. Mary and David, co-founders of the Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign, are organising a Bone Marrow Registration Session in Bristol on that day with The Anthony Nolan Trust.

Mary, the mother of aplastic anaemia patient Yvette says “when we think about celebrations our thoughts often turn to gifts. And that is what we would like people to think about – but not gifts for us. By joining the bone marrow register you could give someone the most precious gift of all – the gift of life.”

David adds “often people are put off when they hear terms like bone marrow, clinic, needles, etc, and turn away without even finding out more about what is involved. Every year many people lose their lives as suitable bone marrow donors cannot be found in time for them. But I am convinced that if more people would just take that step to find out more, then greater numbers would come forward and join the register and consequently more would go on to become donors and more lives would be saved.”

The Anthony Nolan Registration Clinic will take place in The Mall Galleries in Broadmead, in the Calendar Club unit next to Woolworths on the ground floor. It will be open for registration from 11am – 4pm.

You do not have to give bone marrow to join the register. All that is required is a small sample of blood to determine your tissue type. However, you must be prepared and willing to donate in the future if you are asked to. You will only be asked to donate bone marrow if you are found to be a tissue type match to a patient that needs a lifesaving transplant.

Bone marrow is a soft, jelly like tissue that is found in the hollow centre of our large bones. Bone marrow contains stem cells which are essential for the production of blood. There are two methods of donation.

A bone marrow harvest (another charming medical term) requires a stay in hospital of one or two nights. Under general anaesthetic the bone marrow stem cells are extracted from the pelvic bones

by sterile needle and syringe. No surgical incision is required and the blood stem cells replace themselves within 21 days.

A peripheral blood stem cell (pbsc) donation encourages stem cells from the bone marrow into the blood stream. Five days before the collection the donor receives daily injections of a growth factor. The cells can then be collected in one or two collections of 4 – 5 hours each via a sustained needle and a blood cell separator machine. The process is known as apheresis. Neither in-patient hospitalisation nor anaesthesia is required.

Stephen White, Deputy Editor of the Western Daily Press, recently donated bone marrow through the bone marrow harvest method. After being on the bone marrow register for 15 years he came up as a match for a patient suffering from leukaemia. How did Stephen react?

In his words, “to be asked to give another human being the chance to live, whether you know them or not, seemed to me, as they say, a “no-brainer”, in fact a privilege. If your mother, sister, or daughter needed a transplant, you would pray for someone to volunteer, wouldn’t you?”

After donating some of his bone marrow, Stephen had this to say: “Forget all those stories you may have heard about donating bone marrow being incredibly painful. It’s no worse than the stiffness you might get after a game of football, or when you’ve done an afternoon’s work in the garden. And, honestly, if this is all it takes to save a life, I’d do it all again tomorrow.”

Stephen White will be attending the registration clinic and will be happy to answer questions that anyone may have about his experience of donating bone marrow.

Bristol Student Jenny Dawes joined the bone marrow register last year and was soon identified as a match for a patient. She donated stem cells by the peripheral blood stem cell (pbsc) donation method.

So how did Jenny react when she heard that she was a match? “When the letter arrived I was excited. It’s great that doing so little can mean so much for someone else. I never had doubts about doing it and would go through it again without a shadow of a doubt.”

Full details of the event are available on the Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign website www.yvettegate.co.uk, or by contacting David Gate on 0117 9093730. You can also download the Anthony Nolan information booklet and registration forms from the website. Filling in the registration form in advance can save a great deal of time on the day of the clinic.

Notes for Editors:

Further information from:

David Gate, Campaign Director, on 0117 9093760 (office); Mobile 07768 257292

Registration Information

Volunteers are invited to join the Anthony Nolan Trust Bone Marrow Register. You must be between 18 and 40 years of age, in good health and weigh over 8 stone and not be medically obese. You must also be prepared to donate to anyone that may need a bone marrow transplant if you are found to be a suitable match to that patient. There is a particular need for more potential donors who are young, male or from minority ethnic backgrounds.

It is important that people realise that joining the Bone Marrow Register is a serious commitment. Now or in the future someone's life could depend on you and committed donors save lives.

At the clinic volunteers will be asked to complete a registration form and medical questionnaire.

There will then be a discussion with a trained counsellor and the form will be checked.

Finally a small 4ml blood sample (about a teaspoon) is then taken by a qualified nurse. Bone marrow is not taken.

Someone will only be asked to donate bone marrow at a later date if they are found to be a match to a patient needing a life saving transplant. But this would only follow more testing and counselling.

If you are not found to be a match then your tissue type information will be stored on the Anthony Nolan Trust Bone Marrow Register.

Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign

The Yvette Gate Bone Marrow Campaign is a Bristol based independent registered charity. They work to raise awareness about bone marrow related illness, bone marrow registration and donation, and to recruit new potential donors onto the worldwide bone marrow register.

The Campaign was founded by the parents of Yvette Gate from Bedminster in 2005 in response to being told that she needed a bone marrow transplant. Yvette has aplastic anaemia (bone marrow failure) and two years on a donor still cannot be found for her.

They have helped organise bone marrow registration drives in Bristol and directly recruited several hundred new potential donors onto the bone marrow register.