

DKMS Foundation India Celebrates Empowering Women as Agents of Change

Category: Business

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In keeping with the theme of International Women's Day, "Accelerate Action", **DKMS Foundation India** encourages empowering women to take leadership roles in creating awareness about stem cell donation and registering as potential stem cell donors.



(L-R) Donors Navya, Jahnvi, and Loni

The Foundation also celebrates three remarkable young women who dared to choose an untrodden path and, in doing so, gave patients battling life-threatening blood cancer and blood disorders a second chance at life! Three families experienced profound relief thanks to their compassionate stem cell donations.

Only 0.09% of the Indian population of the relevant age group is registered as blood stem cell donors. ⁽¹⁾Only a few Indian female donors come forward to register as potential stem cell donors and donate due to family and societal restrictions. Misconceptions about health and fertility often prevent women from taking this step. Additionally, lack of awareness and misinformation about the stem cell donation process discourage them. DKMS Foundation India works to dispel such myths and misconceptions so that more patients can find matched unrelated stem cell donors.

Patrick Paul, spokesperson at DKMS Foundation India, says, *“Women are now emerging as key contributors to the lifesaving donor pool. Their decision to register and donate is not just*

an act of kindness but a powerful statement of empowerment and change. In fact, 31% of potential blood stem cell donors registered with DKMS are female, and we hope more women will join our lifesavers squad."

Navya Dhatri Vadde(22), a student from Hyderabad, registered as a potential blood stem cell donor approximately four years ago, inspired by her grandmother's battle with leukaemia. When she got the call in mid-2024 that she was a match, her initial reaction was disbelief. She embraced the opportunity to save a life. Navya travelled to Bangalore for the donation with her sister, overcoming her family's concerns. After the procedure, her family beamed with pride, and her friends, moved by her act, showed interest in registering too. *"A small act of kindness can change a life. Donating my blood stem cells was a moment of clarity-knowing that my pain was temporary, but my recipients hope could be lifelong. To every woman out there, I would say we have the power to heal, save, and inspire. Let's take that step towards a better world, one donation at a time."* says Navya.

Jahnvi Parmar (36) signed up as a potential blood stem cell donor at a registration drive organised in Pune in 2020. A few months later, she got the chance to donate her stem cells. Jahnvi says, *"When I first registered as a potential blood stem cell donor, I never imagined I would get the chance actually to save a life. But when the call came, there was no second thought-I knew this was my moment to help. The process was surprisingly simple and non-invasive, and knowing that my donation could give someone a second chance at life made it all worth it. If more people step forward, we can make a real difference. Every registration counts."*

Loni Lipsa Sahoo (24), a lawyer from Rourkela, Odisha, registered as a potential blood stem cell donor in 2021 after coming across an awareness post on social media during the lockdown. She travelled from Rourkela to Bangalore for the donation, supported by her mother and the DKMS Foundation

India care team. *“Registering as a blood stem cell donor was an instinctive decision-I didn’t overthink it; I just knew it was the right thing to do. When I was told I was a match, there was no hesitation. The process was simple and non-invasive, but the impact was life-changing. I stood my ground despite initial resistance; in the end, my family stood by me, too. Knowing that my donation could be a turning point in someone’s life is a feeling beyond words. If we can save a life, why shouldn’t we”* **Loni** asks.

“By sharing these real-life stories, we hope to inspire more women to take this powerful step,” says **Patrick**. *“Every donor added to the registry increases the hope for patients desperately waiting for a match. Together, we can create a future where patients do not have to wait in uncertainty and give them a second chance at life!”* he adds.

The Urgent Need for More Stem Cell Donors

Every five minutes, someone in India is diagnosed with a blood cancer or blood disorder. Many of them are children and young adults whose only hope for survival is a stem cell transplant from an HLA-matched donor. Unfortunately, India faces a significant shortage of registered stem cell donors, especially among women.

A successful transplant depends on finding a donor with a matching HLA type, which is determined by genetic markers. Since HLA types are inherited, patients are most likely to find a match within their own ethnic community. However, with Indians being severely underrepresented in global and national registries, the odds of finding a compatible donor remain low.

On this International Women’s Day, DKMS Foundation India calls upon young, healthy individuals aged 18-55 to register as potential blood stem cell donors.

Registering is easy. Visit www.dkms-india.org/register-now to order your free home swab kit and join the movement to save

lives.

About DKMS Foundation

DKMS Foundation, India, is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the fight against blood cancer and other blood disorders, such as thalassemia and aplastic anemia. They aim to improve the situation of patients who have blood cancer and other blood disorders in India and throughout the world by raising awareness about blood stem cell transplantation and registering potential blood stem cell donors. For more information, please visit www.dkms-India.org

(1) WMDA as of November 2023

