BMDP
Bone Marrow Donor Programme

Key Results from BMDP National Survey 2024

The survey was conducted to better understand public knowledge, attitudes and barriers regarding marrow donation. Surveying over 3,000 respondents which represent Singapore's general population, the findings highlight critical gaps in awareness, misconceptions and the need for community-driven education and collective actions in marrow donation.

a. A Call for Community Driven Education

The survey revealed a significant gap in public understanding of bone marrow and stem cell donation, with 58% of respondents lacking awareness of how they can help save lives. This underscores the urgent need for a collective effort to raise awareness and educate the public. Doctors and family members have emerged as the most trusted sources of advice throughout the donation journey, highlighting the essential role the medical community and family networks play in encouraging potential donors.

b. Misconceptions in Key Demographic (Ages 26-44)

The survey highlighted a particularly concerning trend among adults aged 26 to 44—a demographic crucial for donor recruitment. Many in this group hold incorrect beliefs about bone marrow donation, with 67% mistakenly thinking that donation involves extracting bone, 70% believing it is harmful in the long term, and 76% incorrectly assuming that only younger individuals can donate. This demonstrates a clear opportunity to educate this age group and dispel myths that may be discouraging them from becoming donors.

c. The Shared Challenge: Overcoming the Fear of Needles

For nearly 44% of respondents, the fear of needles is a major obstacle to donating bone marrow, and even among those familiar with the donation process, 54% still express hesitation. This widespread concern could prevent many from taking the crucial step to save lives.

d. Ethnic Representation: Closing the Critical Gap in the Donor Registry

There is a major lack of understanding about the role ethnicity plays in bone marrow donation, with 52% of respondents unaware of its significance. Ethnic background greatly affects the chances of finding a donor match. At present, the odds of finding a perfect donor match in Singapore for local patients stand at 2% for Indians, 20% for Malays and 40% for Chinese.

Moreover, Indians and Malays are significantly under-represented in the donor registry, which exacerbates the challenge for patients from these communities. Addressing this disparity is crucial to ensuring that all patients, regardless of ethnicity, have a fair chance of finding a life-saving donor.

e. Workplace Support is Needed

41% of survey respondents expressed uncertainty about receiving workplace support for marrow donation. This uncertainty may pose a barrier to saving lives, highlighting an important area for improvement in workplace policies, such as offering flexible work arrangements or paid time off for donors.

f. Call to Action: How You Can Help

The findings from this survey make it clear that saving lives through marrow donation is a community effort. BMDP calls on individuals, workplaces, the medical community, media, and government bodies to come together and make a difference:

i. Educate and Share: With 58% of people unaware of how to help, there is an urgent need for education. Learn about the bone marrow donation process at our Virtual Roadshow (https://learn.bmdp.org/) and share this information with your family, friends, and communities. The more people who understand the process, the more lives we can save.

ii. Correct Misconceptions: If you are between the ages of 26 and 44, it's vital to inform yourself and others about the realities of donation. Dispelling myths can open the door for more donors to come forward.

iii. Overcome Fears: The fear of needles should not stand in the way of saving lives. BMDP urges the medical community to step up, provide reassurance, and guide potential donors through their concerns.

iv. Close the Ethnic Gap: Malays and Indians are underrepresented in the donor registry. By registering as a marrow donor, especially if you belong to these communities, you could be the match that saves a life.

v. Workplace Support: Employers can foster a supportive environment by offering flexible work arrangements or paid time off for employees who choose to proceed with marrow donation upon being identified as a match.

Together with BMDP, everyone can play a part to break down the barriers to marrow donation — whether by educating yourself, correcting misconceptions, supporting your friends and family through their donation or advocating for better support, anyone could save a life tomorrow.

Click here to download a free copy of the BMDP Coffee Table Book, "Saving Lives Together".

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