

## Stellar campaign sets target of 100,000 registrations

In the last three decades, the SA Bone Marrow Registry (SABMR) has travelled almost six times to the moon and back to collect blood stem cells from all four corners of the globe for South African patients in need of a transplant.



Source: [Ftxabay](#)

These precious stem cells help rebuild a patient's immune system – working as a cure for numerous blood cancers.

In the lead up to World Marrow Donor Day celebrated on Saturday, 17 September, the SABMR is launching an out-of-this-world campaign, which will see an actual star being named after a lucky donor once the registry reaches its target of 100,000 donor registrations.

Jane Ward, deputy director of the SABMR says they consider each one of their almost 80,000 existing donors as stars!

“Much like stars that are born in the same cluster share similar chemical signatures, which help scientists track the stars they are related to, so our donor searches help us to find genetic twins among humans that share matching DNA, no matter where in the world they are.

“And just like a star falls to grant someone's wish, people – whether it's family, friends or strangers – make sacrifices to make that wish come true. We are asking people to be a star in someone's night sky by signing up to become a blood stem cell donor.



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18 Aug 2022



“We are intimately connected with the universe – even our bodies are said to have been made of many of the same elements that stars are made of – which is why we thought it apt to name a star after a donor once we hit the 100,000 mark. The figure is significant as it symbolises the odds of finding a match. Currently, the chances of finding a tissue match are around 1 in 100 000.”

To date, the SABMR has saved the lives of more than 600 South African patients. However, only 25% of these donors have come from SA.

Ward says when no local matches are found, they have to look abroad, which takes time and can become costly.

“Our patients don’t have the luxury of time. They suffer from life-threatening illnesses such as leukemia, lymphoma, aplastic anemia and immune-deficiency disorders that can claim their lives within the space of a few weeks or months.



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Katja Hamilton 2 Sep 2022



“Less than half of blood stem cell transplants in the country are from donors in South Africa, while the vast majority have come from donors in Germany and America. Stem-cell donations have also come from 25 other countries. If we had a larger local donor pool, patients could be helped sooner, thereby increasing their chances of survival.”

She says each donor that is added to the registry, increases the probability of a patient finding a match.

“In an ideal world, there should be a local donor waiting and ready to go when a patient needs a transplant as is the case in many other countries.”

In SA, only 1% of the population are registered stem-cell donors, compared to 13% in Cyprus, 12% in Israel and 9% in Germany.

“This September, we want to make the world shine a bit brighter for those afflicted with blood disorders. To become eligible for the star-naming, you can sign up to become a donor online or at any of our drives. Who knows, you may become our 1 in 100,000 stem cell star.”

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>