



The Sunflower Fund
Hope begins with you

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25-YEAR OLD PATIENT APPEALS TO THE PUBLIC TO REGISTER AS STEM CELL DONORS

Less than two years after being diagnosed with Aplastic Anaemia, 25-year old Jody Lenders finds himself in desperate need of a blood stem cell (bone marrow) donor, as a transplant is his only hope of cure. Jody who has been in Tygerberg Hospital since November 2018, is holding onto the hope that a donor would be found.

Describing himself as an active and hardworking individual before his diagnosis, he remembers the time in March 2017, when he was diagnosed. "I was at work and noticed some blue marks on my arm," he said. "I showed my mom, who works at the same place and she suggested I go to the pharmacist," he continued. "I went to the pharmacist who recommended that I go to my GP straight away, and so the journey began," he recounted.

The marks were signs of bleeding under his skin, which were the initial indicators of his illness.

"When Jody mentioned that he was diagnosed with Aplastic Anaemia, we were shocked," said his mom Zelda Lenders. "This was a blood disease that we had never heard of," she added. "We immediately searched the internet for information and were overwhelmed with everything we read," she continued.

Aplastic Anaemia is also known as bone marrow aplasia or bone marrow failure. It is a rare condition, in which the body stops producing enough new blood cells and develops as a result of bone marrow damage. This can occur at any age and can be present at birth or occur later in life as in Jody's case. Since being diagnosed, he has been in an out of hospital as he needed blood and platelets at two week intervals. His treatment currently includes blood transfusions every 4 days.

Zelda's hope is that her son who is an only child will find a donor. A patient has a 25% chance of finding a sibling match. The other 75% is a hope of an unrelated matching donor. Ethnicity plays a big role, as matches are based on DNA matches not blood-types. Jody is therefore essentially in search of his genetic twin, and the best chances of finding that perfect match generally exists within the same ethnic group.

The Sunflower Fund NPC, Reg. No: 2000/008979/08, VAT Reg. No. 4350236958
Non-Profit Organisation Reg. No.: 020-728-NPO
Public Benefit Organisation (section 18A) Reg. No : 130000158
In Terms of Section 18A(2) of the Income Tax, No. 58 of 1962

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“We have reached out to friends and family to come forward and register as donors,” Zelda says. “We know that there is no guarantee that they will be a match for Jody,” but there are many people out there who are eligible to register and one of them could be his life-saving match” she continued.

Individuals aged between 18-45 years with a weight of more than 50kgs, a BMI of less than 40 and who are in general good health could be eligible to register.

Stem cell donors are not only potentially able to assist patients with Aplastic Anaemia but other blood diseases such as Leukaemia, Sickle Cell disease and Thalassemia – just to name a few.

The Sunflower Fund is a donor recruitment centre and registry that is committed to saving the lives of individuals diagnosed with blood diseases by increasing the number of patients making it to transplant. They do this by actively recruiting donors to build an ethnically diverse registry of donors committed to helping anyone in need of a life-saving blood stem cell (bone marrow) transplant.

If you would like to help Jody or other patients like him, you can do the following:

- Visit The Sunflower Fund’s website www.sunflowerfund.org.za and read through the donor information to see if you are eligible to register.
- Contact them on 0800 12 10 82 to register telephonically.
- If you do not match the criteria mentioned above – consider making a donation to assist with sponsoring the cost of the DNA tissue-typing test, which costs The Sunflower Fund R3000 per donor that they recruit.
- If you belong to an organisation, sports group or have any ability to mobilise groups of people, invite The Sunflower Fund to come and do a donor drive at your organisation.

“Registering as a donor doesn’t cost you anything – except a voluntary donation if you are in a position to donate,” said Kim Webster Head of Communications at The Sunflower Fund. “Being a donor also involves no operation, anaesthetic or incisions and infact very little pain apart from the slight discomfort of a needle prick,” Webster continued.

“I would like to plead with everyone to register as blood stem cell donors and to donate blood and platelets,” added Jody. “My life and the life of other patients like me depends on it,” he continued. “It is easy to save a life and I would like to thank those who are willing and who are registered for giving me hope,” concluded Jody.

To find out more or to register, contact The Sunflower Fund on 0800 12 10 82 weekdays between 08h30 and 16h30 or on WhatsApp 074 715 0212.

ENDS...



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About The Sunflower Fund:

The Sunflower Fund is a donor recruitment centre and stem cell registry that is part of a global network, dedicated to creating awareness about blood diseases and stem cell donation, recruiting blood stem cell donors and maintaining a registry of committed donors.

The Sunflower Fund pays for the cost of the tissue-type testing. This is fundamental to saving the lives of South Africans who need a stem cell transplant. The chance of finding a matching donor is 1 in 100,000 – and as ethnic origin plays a significant role in the search for a donor, South Africa's rainbow nation is at a distinct disadvantage, requiring a large pool of prospective donors.

Should you wish to become a donor, support one of the fundraising projects or make a financial contribution, please contact The Sunflower Fund on toll-free number: 0800 12 10 82. Visit www.sunflowerfund.org.za to learn more or look out for the DONATE button to make a cash donation via the website.

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