

Immediate Need for South Asian Canadians to Join OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network

(September 18, 2008 – Toronto, ON) – The Appeal for South Asian Donors (ASAD) reports South Asians and other minorities are dramatically underrepresented in the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, leaving patients waiting for a stem cell. Presently twenty patients of South Asian heritage are waiting for a stem cell transplant in Canada. The best hope for patients from all backgrounds is a match from someone in their ethnic community.

One such person who has been affected by this crisis is Dr. Guha, a prominent Toronto-based neurosurgeon, cancer researcher, and tireless advocate within the South Asian community, who was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia in August. He cannot find a stem cell match within his own family and must rely on unrelated donors.

ASAD is working to increase South Asian participation in the OneMatch Network. Since the beginning of its campaign on August 10, 2008, more than 200 people have registered; in July 2008, that number was 38. Additionally, ASAD has partnered with the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network to raise awareness in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond, by targeting community organizations, temples and other religious institutions, social networks and more, in order to reach the approximately half a million South Asians who live in the GTA alone.

The need for more diverse participation is vital since 70% of patients must rely on donated stem cells. Although there are approximately 230,000 men and women across Canada registered to donate stem cells or bone marrow and patients have access to a world-wide network of potential donors, only 5000 people of South Asian descent (about 2 %) have registered in Canada according to OneMatch.

Anyone can help participate by visiting OneMatch.ca to register with the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, managed by Canadian Blood Services. Individuals between the ages of 17 and 50 are eligible to register. It's easy and quick and within days, Canadian Blood Services will call to confirm participation in the registry and mail a registration kit with cotton swabs. Applicants take a cheek swab to collect a DNA sample, then place it in a sealable vial and send it back. It's that easy.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: COMMUNITY AWARENESS EVENT

On **Sunday, September 28, 2008**, the Bengali community hosts a **South Asian Stem Cell Awareness Event** as part of their Appeal for South Asian Donors at The Tagore Centre, 140 Millwick Drive (near the intersection of Steeles Ave West and Islington Ave.) from **11 am to 3 pm**. OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network will be on hand to facilitate the registration process and to offer any further information on becoming a stem cell donor.

For media enquiries, contact **Piali Roy, South Asian Stem Cell Awareness Event** at piali.roy@gmail.com or 416.806.9848; **Ashutosh Chowdhury, ASAD** (community organizer) at ashutosh@rogers.com or 416.709.1870; **Soumo Mukherjee, ASAD**, (community organizer) at soumo.mukherjee@gmail.com; **Dr. Prateek Lala, ASAD** (medical liaison) prateek.lala@gmail.com; and visit our internet site, appealforsouthasiandonors.blogspot.com