

Thirty-eight bone marrow donors praised for selfless contributions (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Bone Marrow Donor Award Ceremony 2024 organised by the Hong Kong Bone Marrow Donor Registry (HKBMDR) of the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS) was held today (September 7), recognising 38 dedicated bone marrow donors for their selfless contributions. The BTS calls on more citizens to join in saving lives by registering for bone marrow donation, thereby giving a new lease on life to patients.

The ceremony was officiated by the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, the Chairman of the BTS Governing Committee and the Hong Kong Bone Marrow Donor Registry Governing Sub-committee, Mr Ignatius Chan, the President of Hong Kong Marrow Match Foundation, Professor Alice Chiu, and the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority, Dr Tony Ko.

Dr Lam paid tribute to all donors for their selfless contributions on behalf of patients in his opening remarks, "Donors have demonstrated the heroic and caring act by reaching out for the patients out of compassion and providing them with renewed hope. I encourage more citizens to register for bone marrow donation, offering the blessing of recovery for patients in need."

At the ceremony, a pair of bone marrow donor-recipient met each other for the first time and shared their experience. The recipient Ms Chang, expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the donor Miss Chen, "With her kind donation, I can finally recover." Ms Chang was diagnosed as lymphoma in 2016, and the situation of the recurrent illness went on and off. Later in 2017, Ms Chang started searching for bone marrow donation in the HKBMDR, and she finally received the bone marrow from Miss Chen for transplantation in March 2018.

Miss Chen, who is a regular blood donor, registered as a bone marrow donor in her college years. She agreed to donate with no hesitation. Her kind acts definitely saved the life of Ms Chang.

The human leukocyte antigen (HLA) of donor and recipient must be highly or completely matched for a successful transplantation. "The BTS helped patients requiring unrelated transplantation search for any potentially matched donor in the database. According to statistics, the chance of finding a matching unrelated donor is about one in five to ten thousand only. The odds will be even less than one in one hundred thousand for patients who have rare HLA type," the Chief Executive and Medical Director of the BTS, Dr Lee Cheuk-kwong added. He hoped to see more young people register as bone marrow donor to increase the chance for finding a matched donor for patients.

The world's first Chinese-based unrelated bone marrow donor registry was founded in Hong Kong in 1991. As of June 2024, more than 177 000 people in Hong Kong have registered for voluntary bone marrow donation, and provided matched haematopoietic stem cells for transplantation for 1 179 local and 132 overseas patients.

Members of the public aged between 18 and 50 and in good health condition can register for bone marrow donation at any blood donor centre. The simple registration process includes completing a registration form, followed by a health screening and taking blood samples for laboratory tests. For information on bone marrow donation, please call 2710 1206 or visit the website at www.ha.org.hk/rcbts.

