

# Kochi stem cell donor saves a life

DC CORRESPONDENT  
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A stem cell donation was held at a city hospital on World Blood Donation Day on Tuesday to save the life of a patient with fatal blood disorder who has been waiting for a matching donor.

M.N. Sarath, 25, a member of DATRI, a Chennai-based national stem cell registry, and a Cochin Shipyard employee, donated stem cell to the patient under treatment at Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences.

Mr Sarath, who registered with DATRI in 2013, is happy that he could save a life. "I never thought that I would become a match as I learnt that the chances are very thin. However, I was found to be a match for a patient. To gift a life is such a privilege, and I am happy to have become the chosen one for this patient," he said.

While blood donation is popular, stem cell transplant is yet to get acceptance due to lack of awareness and unjustified apprehensions, say experts. Owing to the fear factor, only less than 1 per cent of the Indian population has been registered as blood stem cell donors. Fatal blood disorders can be cured through a blood stem



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cell transplant from a genetically matched donor.

"DATRI has over 1.33 lakh registered donors in the country with 27,658 donors from Kerala, the highest among all states. With ethnicity playing an important role in finding a suitable match, increasing the existing database with donors from all states will go a long way in helping potential recipients from different regions," said Aby Sam John, donor drive coordinator, DATRI.

According to medical experts, the possibility of saving a patient with fatal blood diseases through stem cell transplant is 60 per cent. But it depends on the stage of the disease, they point out.