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...her patient cured of C...
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Jinal Patel and Ankit (standing) with Dr Revathi Raj, Raghu Rajagopal, co-founder & CEO, DATRI, and Dr Jose Eason, at the Apollo Speciality Hospital on Wednesday | MARTIN LOUIS

'Banking' on a 70k-Strong Network

On World Cancer Day, city-based stem cell bank DATRI revealed that it had succeeded in building a strong network of donors, who were mostly from colleges and religious places

Express News Service

Chennai: Within a span of four years, a Chennai-based stem cell bank has expanded its transplant registry from a paltry few to over 70,000 donors. And all of this has been possible only because it has teams of volunteers and staff canvassing in the commonest of places, "Colleges are a huge source of donors for our transplant registry, but we get a lot of response from places of religious worship like churches and temples. People seem to want to help out a lot more when we do our awareness campaigns there," said Raghu Rajagopal, co-founder and CEO of DATRI Stem Cell bank.

With an acute need for stem cells and donors for patients with blood cancers, banks like these are essential for making a real difference. "We

are looking at expanding our registry to one million in the next few years. We've also tied up with an international stem cell banking network to source necessary transplants, when the need arises," he added. From facilitating just a few such blood stem transfusions, they've managed 83 till now, of which almost a fourth were done at Apollo Multispeciality Hospitals. On World Cancer Day, Apollo organised a meeting between a 17-year-old Leukemia patient Ankit, who was the recipient of a life-saving infusion from a 24-year-old donor Jinal Patel. Though the surgery was

done in Chennai, both are from Ahmedabad and they were united through the cord blood bank. "Ethnicity plays a major role in these procedures, so we have a huge network that spans 20 States in India," he added.

Senior consultant and paediatric hemato oncologist Dr Revathi Raj who treated the patient said, "There is still some amount of stigma associated with cancer which can be eliminated only by increasing awareness on the treatment procedures and highlighting successful case stories which will break the taboo associ-

ated with cancer. Significant improvements have occurred in the treatment of childhood cancers and we now have the technology and infrastructure to enable the treatment of several blood related disorders. While earlier we had to depend mostly on foreign registries to find an unrelated matched donor, where the probabilities of a match are lower, we now have a viable option in DATRI." Raghu Rajagopal, said, "There are more than 20 million registered donors in the world. However, in India, lack of proper awareness and some misconceptions are preventing people from donating. As a result, there are very few registered donors. There are still some apprehensions about the procedure of donation and some assume that it might be painful or cause some physiological defect, which is untrue."

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