

Lankan Optometry Student in Need of Donor

by Sonali Shenoy

Chennai: While most showed up for Mira (2) at a blood stem cell donor drive organised for her in Chennai on Sunday, a few were also hoping against hope to find a match for another patient.

Vithiya Alphons (24) from Jaffna, Sri Lanka who is studying at Cardiff University, UK to be an optometrician urgently needs a match to cure her Acute Myeloid Leukemia in the next two months. Or else her family and friends may not see her live to complete her degree.

With drives conducted in several parts of the UK on the same day, her Facebook page Help Save V's Life shows us friends and family are pushing for a match in Germany and India. But there is a higher chance of finding a match among South Asian donors, according to Raghu Rajagopal, co-founder and CEO of DATRI

SWAB TO SAVE A LIFE

- Prospective donors must be between the ages of 18 to 60 and in good health
- A test involves a simple swab of cells from the inside of the cheeks and takes less than five minutes
- The donor is then entered into the blood stem cell donor registry

Blood Stem Cell Donors Registry, as 'ethnicity' plays a huge role in finding a match.

"Caucasians have a 70 per cent chance of finding a match, but Asians only have a 2 per cent chance. And this is because there are lower numbers registered in such centres in India compared to the West, as well as a diversity in the gene pool," Rajagopal says.

Despite a database of 1.2 lakh registered donors in their system, DATRI is still hunting intensively to help Vithiya,

who until her diagnosis five months ago, was a happy go-lucky optometry student.

Her friend Ezhilakalaipriya Herbert tells us Vithiya will never have had an extreme fever and headache, and had never even needed to go to a hospital." And now the clock is ticking and doctors say she has only 45 days to live," she says, clearly devastated.

After four rounds of chemotherapy, that meant vomiting six or seven times every day and her brother even quitting his job to stay by her side, Vithiya remains hopeful. She reportedly says, "I'm a big believer that everything happens for a reason. Maybe it will make sense one day. In the meantime I'm determined to raise awareness in my community. Even if it doesn't help me, it could help someone else."

Log on to the Facebook page Help Save V's Life to make a difference.



Vithiya Alphons, the Sri Lankan optometrics student who is in need of a blood stem cell donor | EXPRESS