



# DATRI STAY CONNECTED

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## MANAGEMENT DESK

We are back with yet another edition of our Doctor's Newsletter. In this edition we have packed some informative articles, cherished moments and celebrations at DATRI.

Post pandemic we started on a slow note. We took baby steps to get into the normal mode of work. Looking back at the challenges we experienced in the wake of COVID-19 we are both humbled and hopeful. Humbled as we were able to cross over the tide and Hopeful that we will continue to receive your support in our endeavor to gift lives.

Our recruitment drives, donation activities and collections are on full swing. We are exploring newer opportunities and partnerships to enhance our outcomes.

We are extremely happy to share that this July, 2022, DATRI crossed 1000th collection! It is a moment of pride and joy for all DATRIANS. We are overwhelmed with the cooperation and wishes we have received from all of you in reaching this far. Your contribution is invaluable and we look forward to your continued support in our journey.

Happy Reading !



**Claudia Rutt**  
Chief Financial Office



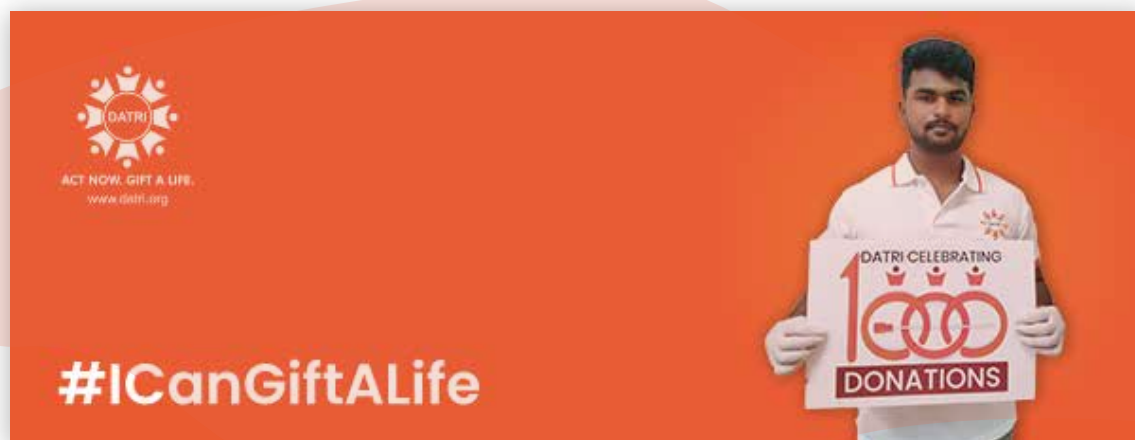
**Sumati Misra**  
Head - Counseling and TCM



**Srinivasan Selvarajan**  
Associate Director

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## 1,000 COLLECTIONS AND COUNTING... THE JOURNEY SO FAR!



It was a proud moment for all of us at DATRI when in July this year we touched 1000 donations. It has been a learning and rewarding experience and we know without You all this would not have been possible.

It is but natural at this juncture to look back on how our journey has been. It was a humble beginning. DATRI set up its first office in a small place in Chennai with just two employees in 2009. The initial days were tough, fraught with many teething issues -- from bureaucratic hurdles to poor awareness about stem cell donation in India. But the team knew that they were the lifeline for many patients in search of unrelated stem cell donors. The breakthrough came in 2011 when the first successful collection came through. Our first donor Mr. Ajith Kumar traveled from Bhubaneswar to Chennai for the stem cell donation which was carried out in Apollo Hospital. The recipient was Akbar Sahal and the transplant took place in CMC, Vellore. Lakshmi, one of the first employees reminisces, "It was an emotional moment for all of us when we were told that the donation was successful. It was a day to remember. We felt we had passed an exam. This success emboldened our resolve to continue in our mission to save lives" After the first successful donation, DATRI moved to achieve the next milestone - 100th donation in 2015.

But with progress, we also faced many challenges. Natural calamities put spokes in the wheel. Be it the Chennai floods or the Kerala floods; these disasters posed huge challenges in our flow of work. But we managed to tide over these hurdles and move on.

With each passing year we set up new benchmarks in terms of donations, collections and reach numbers. Our consolidation helped us to extend our work, and today, we are working across India and we have more than 4,93,236 donors in our registry.

But our biggest blow was COVID-19. The pandemic derailed much of our work. Our collections and recruitments hit zero. It was the most testing time for us. The organisation had to recalibrate its strategy. COVID-19 taught us many tough lessons and we realized unusual times require unusual decisions. We revisited the processes keeping the donor and employee safety paramount. With a thin staff backup and with apprehensions we restarted our work in 2020. We reached out to Transplant Centers for transplants. We thought that convincing the donors would not be an easy task, but to our surprise they stood up like a pillar of strength for us. The first domestic product during COVID-19 was transported by road from Ahmedabad to Pune by our own DATRI employee.

From domestic transplants we slowly moved to international product delivery. We had to adhere to COVID-19 travel and quarantine protocols which posed a huge challenge. We were helped by some good Samaritans. One such instance was how the flight crew members became our courier persons. Lufthansa airlines was generous enough to allow their flight staff to courier the blood stem cells and hand over the product at the destination. Thus our international delivery restarted factoring the COVID quarantine rules.

From managing COVID fallout, we moved to achieve a milestone in July 2022. DATRI completed 1,000 donations. This achievement would not have been possible without the generous support from hospitals, doctors, donors and everyone who has partnered with us.

A thousand donations are an inspiration for us, and, at the same time, it encourages us to go further for we know that there are thousands of recipients waiting for their match and we hold the key to bring back that zing in their lives. At this juncture we are reminded aptly of a line from T S Eliot's poem The Waste Land, "Hurry up please, its time"!



**Celebrating 1000 donations**

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## DOCTOR'S SPEAK

DATRI in its life saving mission completed 1000 Blood Stem Cell Donations which means our donors have gifted 1000 lives. This is a proud moment for DATRI. These twelve years of DATRI's journey were made possible only because of selfless donors who have donated and potential donors who have registered with us. In this journey we cannot but commend the doctors whose role helped us to reach this far. Here are few snippets from Doctors who spoke about our 1000 donations:

### **Dr. Revathi Raj, Haematologist, Apollo Hospitals**

"I have been associated with DATRI for over a decade and its absolutely amazing how many lives they have touched. It brings joy to see you reach 1000 donations and more importantly how you have been able to raise awareness on blood marrow transplantation and donations and helped so many people with the gift of life."



[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/\\_WBHJIDQ8VQ](https://youtu.be/_WBHJIDQ8VQ)

### **Dr. Ruchira Misra, Pediatric Haematology, Oncology and BMT, SRCC Children's Hospital, Mumbai**

"Getting a donor to donate is not an easy task from any angle. From organizing donor drives to counselling donors to getting stem cell collection requires a lot of commitment and hard work. Hats off to have done this for 1000 times. Congratulations for completing 1000 donations and continue with your hard work and keep it going."



[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/IBOSRVO\\_\\_TC](https://youtu.be/IBOSRVO__TC)

### **Dr. Joseph John, Professor, Department of Clinical Haematology, Oncology & BMT, CMC, Ludhiana**

"Congratulations for completing 1000 donations in India. This is a landmark achievement and we are all proud of you. We have been associated with DATRI for more than 8 years and many stem cell transplants have been done at CMC Ludhiana. Donor recruitment is a challenge and we have seen how DATRI has motivated people to register and save lives. Your work is commendable and we wish you all the best."



[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/PNZAHCWY8O](https://youtu.be/PNZAHCWY8O)

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## RECRUITMENT STARTS AGAIN – PARTNER WITH US

COVID-19 has reshaped the way we work. It has brought a radical sea change in terms of how we communicate, co-create and deliver. Going virtual has become the new normal and today we have embraced it like a fish to water.

The new normal has helped many establishments to reduce their overheads. And one has seen that with the easing of restrictions, many establishments have continued with the option of working from home. DATRI is one of the organizations that adopted the work from home model, keeping in mind the safety of its employees. But this meant that many of our outdoor activities had to be put on hold. Donor recruitment or registration was one of the core activities that could not be carried out during COVID-19 restrictions. We could not conduct our face-to-face registration drives -- be it colleges, offices or malls. For almost two years, we were at zero recruitments, which meant that we did not have any new people to add to our Blood Stem Cell Registry. At the same time, we also could not continue with our donations considering the safety of our donors.

But with COVID cases going down and restrictions being eased, we are now actively conducting recruitment drives across the country. In the last one year, we have achieved a milestone by crossing 1,000 donations. Today, we are back on our toes and our recruitment drives are in full swing. We are scouting and looking forward to partner with other organizations for recruitment drives.



**DONOR REGISTRATION DRIVE**

Recruitment drives at DATRI are crucial as it helps to reach out to more people. These drives are to generate awareness about Blood Stem Cell donations and drive home the message on how each one of us can be instrumental in saving the lives of many who are suffering from different types of blood cancer.

We are closely working with hospitals, organizations, commercial establishments, doctors and lay people to help us in taking forward such drives. Doctors and hospitals have been very forthcoming in helping us to conduct drives for recruitments. and they have also helped us to give leads and ideas for such drives. Your partnership for the drives could be a life changer for many suffering from blood cancer. You could continue to support our cause:

<https://datri.org/create-stem-cell-donor-campaigns/>

- **Request your patients to conduct recruitment drives**
- **Organise recruitment campaigns in hospitals**

We look forward to your support. For giving leads for recruitment drives connect with **sumati@datri.org** and we will revert to take it forward.



### **DONOR REGISTRATION DRIVE**

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## COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON OUR WORK PROCESSES

The pandemic took India's health sector by storm. Battling the virus was a mammoth task and along with this came the huge task of maintaining a sanitized set up. Be it hospitals, offices, commercial establishment or public places, nobody was spared from putting up systems for a fool proof safety zone for business continuity. Washing hands, sanitizing, wearing masks became the order of the day. Every wave reinforced the need to have stringent systems in place as everyone was susceptible to the virus.

As an organization that works to save lives by organising blood stem cells collection and donation, it was imperative for us to adhere to COVID-19 protocols so that our donors, employees, partners felt safe while working or partnering with us.

Since all this was new to us, we internally discussed on how to go about it. We consulted our Medical Director, Dr. Jose M Easow and also went through the guidelines & protocols shared by World Marrow Donor Association (WMDA), Indian Society for Bone and Marrow Transplant (ISMBT), The Asia Pacific Blood and Marrow Transplantation (APBMT) and incorporated the guidelines customising it to India's situation.

Once we had come up with the COVID-19 guidelines, we then moved to the next step of orienting and training our own staff -- both through virtual and face-to-face meetings on the protocols of COVID-19. We also organized simulations and mock situation drills so that they were equipped to handle different emergency and panic situations.

### Impact on DATRI Registrations



**2019:** 44,319

**2020:** 20,953

**2021:** 7,045

**2022:** 23,641

(Till 28th September 2022)

COVID-19 has brought in significant changes in our processes and this means we have to invest both monetarily and in terms of time. Today many of the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, but DATRI continues to follow all the safety protocols. Though the virus does not spread through blood stem cells, we continue to do the COVID-19 test for our donors. And if the test is positive we defer the donation and only after a negative report is submitted, we go ahead for the donation.

We have shared our COVID-19 protocols with all our partners. Our partners -- be it doctors, hospitals, donors or recipients -- are confident about us and they know that we consider their safety paramount in the work we do. We also follow the safety protocols of all the hospitals. Till date we have never compromised on safety protocols as we believe we cannot put anyone at risk as it will defeat the purpose for the cause we are here-To Save Lives.

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## **QUALIFICATION OF TRANSPLANT CENTRE – THE NEED**

Hospitals have been crucial partners for DATRI in the mission to save lives. Every life counts and for all of us to witness a happy ending it is imperative to ensure that our systems and procedures are fool proof and safe. We at DATRI are stickler for ensuring the Transplant Centre fulfils all the criteria which are requisite for conducting a transplant. These are mandatory in the interest of the donor and the recipient. We have parameters and pre-defined qualifications in place for all hospitals and these have been adapted from World Marrow Donor Association (WMDA) forms. The forms help us understand the hospital's capability and infrastructure and the team's ability and experience to handle not just the transplants but any medical eventualities.

As we are all aware that it is not so easy to find a matching donor. Sometimes getting the right match may take even years. So when we get the right match it is a do or die situation for us. We put in concerted efforts to ensure the transplant goes through smoothly and the patient has the best chance of recovery and he or she can meet the donor at a later date. In order to ensure the best outcomes or successful transplants to be processed, it is important for all registries and partners to adhere to the guidelines set by WMDA. We enter into a partnership only if the hospital has done a minimum number of transplants. For us the doctor and the team handling the transplant should have worked together to ensure seamless partnership. We work closely with the Medical team of the hospital for all transplants. When we have ensured that all the processes have been followed and everything is in place we initiate the process for collection.

Our Medical Director works closely with the team for empanelment of hospitals and any exceptions are clearly documented post exhaustive discussion to ensure the best outcome for the patient and also our donors.

## Once, Twice, Thrice and Fourth Time Lucky!

It may seem that organizing a transplant is just a procedure and one only needs to find the match donor. But the case is not as simple as it looks. In our 12 years of experience we have had several cases where collections and donations were herculean tasks. Many a time we have been on tenterhooks and at times our only recourse is to seek divine intervention for a happy ending. We bring here a case in point where we struggled to get the transplant done despite finding successive right match.

The recipient required a quick transplant and DATRI was able to find a matched donor.. We initiated the process and the counselling session for the donor. Unfortunately, during the verification typing and the infectious disease markers, the donor was found to have dengue. Hence the donation from this donor was deferred.

The team went in for another search and DATRI was able to get the right match. The 2nd donor agreed. The team picked up the donor from his residence for the stem cell donation. When they were just about to reach the hospital the donor received a call from his wife with the request that she would like to accompany for the medical checkup. The donor requested if he could return home and pick up his wife. DATRI team tried to convince the donor to first meet the doctor. But the donor was vehement. The team took the donor to his home and waited outside for him to return with his wife. But the donor did not return and neither responded to any calls. The team tried to reach the donor through known contacts but to no avail. Meanwhile time was running out for the patient and DATRI intensified its search.

We were lucky to find another match but we were skeptical how this would pan out considering the failures in the earlier attempts. In this case the donor was leaving abroad and wanted the collection to be done as quickly as possible. But this time too luck was not on our side. The donor had a skin condition – which was detailed during the doctor's consultation and health check-up and the doctors ruled out the donation.

DATRI initiated another search. We were able to find a 4th donor. He was extremely busy and requested the process of donation to be completed as quickly as possible. The donor's blood samples were collected and all procedures were completed without any delay. The Transplant has taken place successfully and we are waiting with our fingers crossed to hear about the patient's recovery

We at DATRI are the crucial link between the patient, recipient and hospital. Many a time we face so many questions from the people involved in the process and we find it difficult to explain where the delay is or why we failed to make it happen. The questions range from why a donor backed out or what's ailing the donor etc. Behind a transplant procedure a lot of backend work happens which is not visible to all. Many of them are challenging. But what keeps us going is the huge responsibility to see all those who knock at our door are able to find the right match. The delays are just stumbling blocks but not impediments. And we know that as DATRI's well-wishers you are walking with us and there lies our strength!

# BLOOD STEM CELL DONATION PROCESS

## PRE – DONATION PROCESS



Verification  
typing



Pre – screening  
(Master health  
checkup  
of donor)

## DONATION PROCESS

### Peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) collection process



Mobilization  
(G-CSF Injections  
for 5 days) to  
increase blood  
stem cells in blood



Peripheral blood  
stem cell collection  
(3–5 hours)

or

### Bone marrow collection process



Bone marrow harvested  
from the pelvic bone

## POST – DONATION PROCESS



Collected blood  
stem cells  
transported to  
the patient



Harvested  
product  
transfused to  
the patient