



Save a life. Join the Registry.

That is NOT a picture of me donating blood. That is a picture of me saving someone's life. Yeah, as corny as it sounds, that is what happened last year. I donated my stem cells to save an unknown recipient in dire need of those cells. This person was as old as me and had a form of deadly cancer. When they would do his final chemotherapy, he will be completely devoid of any stem cells in his body to survive. So, they could do the process only after they had identified a matching donor. After 45 days of my donation, I got to know that the person received my stem cells, recuperated well and had returned back to his home, leading a normal life. I cannot express in words how grateful I felt to the powers unknown that I was actually able to help him.

Almost 5 years ago, my wife and I had registered ourselves as donors on the AADP (Asian American Donor Program) registry in the bay area. There was a swab drive at the Hindu temple and one of our friends insisted that we do it. So, we did it without truly understanding what it takes to do a donation. Four years later, I had completely forgotten about it. Then, in the fall of 2014, I got an email as well as a snail mail indicating that I was a potential match for someone and that they are trying to reach me. I got very excited about the opportunity of being able to help someone in need but at the same time, I suddenly got apprehensive about the process. But, after talking with an amazing person at the NMDP (National Marrow Donor Program), I was completely clear about what I am expected to do. I had no fear after that. First, they do a detailed set of tests on my vitals. Unfortunately, as destiny would have it, my own vitals were not doing well for the procedure and they felt as concerned about my health as much as they did about the recipient. So, they actually called off the procedure. I was never more disappointed in life. Even though they said that they may be able to get another donor, the guilt of not being able to help someone in that stage was brutal.

Then, I started working with my doc on my health. Early last year, I got a call again from NMDP asking if my health was better. I told them that everything seems to be under control. They asked me if I was willing to do the donation still. I was pleasantly surprised and I asked them if it was another patient. They said that it was the same patient and that they could not find any other donor and that I was the only one!! I couldn't contain my excitement but at the

same time, I was worried that the tests may fail this time too. But, my prayers were heard this time. Everything went through fine and I went ahead with the process. I turned 40 last June and until all this happened, I was tearing myself to understand my purpose in life and if I had done anything meaningful in 40 years. Once this happened, I felt inner peace.



With the collection of my stem cells - 4.5 hours later.

My point of sharing this story is not to earn your likes. It is purely to spread awareness about this process. In the last one year, I found out that most of my friends are either unaware of what this entails or really scared of this process. My point is this - If I can do this, you can do it too! I had never even donated blood before this procedure! The critical point to note here is that ethnicity is a major factor when it comes to finding a good match between the donor and the recipient because the matching is based on HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen), which are inherited. And, unfortunately, the minorities (like me) are the ones that have a low registration count on the worldwide registries. That doesn't help when one of us should get sick, God forbid. :-(-

Kindly do me a favor. Go to join.bethematch.org/Dinesh today. If you are in India, go to www.datriworld.org. Learn more about the process. There is a lot of information on the sites. Ask me if you have any questions. I will be happy to answer them. But, make it a point to register yourself as a donor. You never know when you will be asked to save someone's life. Please do this for me. Share this information with your friends to create more awareness as well.

Dinesh