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Getting More South Asian-Americans Registered As Potential Donors Will Greatly Increase Chances of Finding Successful Matches for Those In Need Of Transplants

Hackensack, NJ - Citing the case of Pia Awal, a 29 year-old South Asian-American resident of New Jersey suffering from Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) who is in desperate need of a bone marrow transplant, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today encouraged South Asian-Americans to register with the National Marrow Donor Program. Rothman said increasing the number of South Asian-Americans in the registry would help boost the chances of finding a compatible donor for Pia and other South Asians in need of a bone marrow transplant.

"Pia Awal's urgent need of a bone marrow transplant for her AML illustrates the importance of increasing South Asian-American participation in the National Marrow Donor Program registry," Rothman said. "While there are more than 1 billion South Asians in the world, only one-tenth of one percent are part of the worldwide bone marrow registry. New Jersey alone has over 250,000 South Asian-American residents so we must do a better job of registering South Asian-Americans as potential bone marrow donors."

Currently, only 50,000 South Asian-Americans are registered as potential bone marrow donors. Since no South Asian countries have yet to officially establish a bone marrow registry, the vast majority of potential donors come from the U.S. With such a small number of registered potential donors, it becomes extremely difficult to find the right match for a South Asian person who needs a bone marrow transplant. The chances of finding a bone marrow match are between 1 in 20,000 and 1 in a million. People of South Asian descent include, but are not limited to, Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Trinidadians, Guyanese, Surinamese, and Fijians.

"Increasing registration in the National Marrow Donor Program dramatically boosts the chances of a match for Pia and other South Asians around the world in need of bone marrow transplants," Rothman said. "By registering to become a bone marrow donor today, South Asian-Americans may be able to give the greatest gift of all to Pia and others in need of a transplant -- life."

Those interested in information regarding registering or organizing a donor drive are encouraged to contact the Match Pia campaign at www.matchpia.org or the National Marrow Donor Program at www.marrow.org.

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