

Need for Donor Registry Prompts Nobel Nomination

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(NewsUSA) – When Dr. Bart Fisher’s son, Ivan, was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder in 1983 at eight-years-old, the only cure was a bone marrow transplant. However, at that time, there was only a small bone marrow registry in England, with 50,000 names and, in the U.S., no registry at all to find a match.

Since Ivan’s death, Dr. Fisher has made it his mission to establish large marrow registries around the world that would provide the gift of life to those in need of marrow transplantation.

Underscoring the need for a donor registry is the fact that every nine minutes an American dies from a blood cancer such as leukemia, lymphoma, or myeloma. In 2018 alone, there were 174,250 new blood cancer cases.

“I tried to take a personal disaster and turn it into a mechanism that could save the lives of others needing a marrow match,” says Dr. Fisher, a Washington D.C. lawyer, and PhD.

Now, due in large part to Dr. Fisher’s efforts, the National Marrow Donor Program and other marrow registries match voluntary marrow donors with patients in need of a bone marrow transplant, as well as those who have marrow failure. Since the formation of the program in 1986, more than 80,000

transplants have taken place as a result of matches found by marrow registries and over 6,200 transplants a year are performed.

According to Dr. Robert K. Stuart, Ivan’s doctor, the registry was needed long before it became a reality.

“The skeptics said we need to develop the technology before we would be ready for a registry. But what people don’t realize is that creating the registry is what drove the technology development. We would not be where we are if we had waited to create the registry later,” he says.

In addition to his work to create an international registry, Dr. Fisher co-founded the Give Life Foundation, which seeks to expand the base of voluntary organ donors for the worldwide registries. In turn, the Foundation has launched the Swab for Life campaign, a program that promotes registries through pharmacies, dentists’ offices, and doctors’ offices.

For his tireless efforts, the Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation (AAMDS) has nominated Dr. Fisher, its founder and a member of its Board of Directors, for a 2019 Nobel Prize in two categories: peace and medicine.

“The Nobel Prize nomination recognizes the significant contributions of Dr. Fisher to the establishment and growth of marrow registries around the world, and we are pleased and honored to support his efforts to advance this life-saving cure for aplastic anemia, leukemia, and other blood cancers,” says Neil Horikoshi, executive director and CEO of the Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation.

“I am honored to receive this nomination on behalf of my son, knowing that the work I have done has helped thousands of people in need. That it will continue to save lives is a legacy to Ivan’s memory.”