

The Blue Moon Project
7 - 23
Multi-year Project

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1.0 Project Overview

1.1 Area of Concern:

6 people are diagnosed with blood-related diseases everyday. In severe cases, the last resort is usually a marrow transplant. A marrow transplant requires a donor with a similar Human Leukocyte Antigen(HLA) profile, with the odds of finding a suitable match 1 in 20,000.

1.2 Challenges Identified

Patients turn to the Bone Marrow Donor Programme (BMDP) which maintains a national registry of possible donors. In the year 2019, BMDP only managed to facilitate 73 successful transplants. The only viable option to increase the odds of finding a match is to increase the number of donors in the registry. BMDP faces a donor shortage due to misinformation, myths and misconceptions within the general public, especially amongst youths and their families.

1.3 Underlying Problem:

Patients with blood diseases encounter difficulty in finding successful matches due to a lack of awareness and various misconceptions revolving around marrow donation, as well as a need of funding for BMDP, how might we come up with a comprehensive solution to alleviate the lack of donors in Singapore?

1.4 Action Plan and Implementation Methods:

We aim to raise awareness on Marrow Donation in Singapore and address misconceptions surrounding marrow donation. This project aims to reach out to those aged 16 - 21, so as to engage newly-eligible donors.

This project has been improved upon from previous years by having an increased focus on patients of blood diseases instead of solely focusing on raising awareness for the Bone Marrow Donor Programme, to increase the awareness and engagement of stakeholders from the Registry to the patients.

2.0 Implementation of Action Plan and outcomes to date

Date/2020	
Stage 1: Setting a strong foundation	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation of 70-men organising team from various schools ● Goal setting within the team to set clear and achievable goals
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting with BMDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set goals given the COVID-19 situation ● Committee meetings to plan for the year
Stage 2: Brainstorming and Planning	
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needs analysis on social media with 87 students
Stage 3: Planning and organisation	
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Secured funds from Youth-For-Causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A seed fund of \$1600
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designing of merchandise and website
Stage 4: Implementation of Action plan	
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core members went for a blood donation as part of a social media initiative to educate the general public about the peripheral blood stem cell transplant
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start of our social media publicity month ● Virtual concert to help raise awareness and funds for the Bone Marrow Donor Programme ● Infographics to debunk the many myths about marrow donation and to educate the general public
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The Observatory”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5-part interview series with professionals who are involved in the various aspects of the marrow donation process (HLA experts, CEO of BMDP, volunteers and doctors, courier managing transport of marrow donation)
July - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elicit donations from the general public through the Giving.sg page for our beneficiary. (Raised a total of \$290)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Convince public under 18 to pledge as a potential donor ● Online Concert: Concert Eclipse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4 part series where we invited youths to perform while educating the public about marrow donation and advocating for our cause
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3.0 Project Outcomes:

3.1 Accomplishments

Online: We are currently concluding our online initiative month. Footage and editing for “The Observatory” has been completed and the 5 episodes will be rolled out over the next two weeks. Via these social media initiatives and infographics posted on our Instagram page, we have averaged 1200 unique visitors on each of our posts, and received a total of 1475 likes in 2020.

Community: We have successfully convinced 48 individuals to pledge as a potential bone marrow donor via our online form, and raised a total of \$290 in donations from our giving.sg page. We have also educated the general public and addressed common misconceptions they had regarding bone marrow donation. As such, we have been able to make a significant impression on the public and raised greater awareness for Marrow Donation.

3.2 Reflection on outcomes

Awareness:

Many have misconceptions regarding the process of marrow donation. Therefore, this year we have decided to include blood donation as one of our focuses, to experience what it is truly like to be a donor. Through the experience, we have debunked the myth that the donation process is extremely painful and has long lasting effects, this has motivated us to be even more passionate about the cause as we have learned that the small sacrifices we make could potentially give someone else a second chance in life.

COVID-19:

Due to the unique COVID-19 situation this year, many of our planned initiatives were unable to come to fruition. Physical events which were previously a cornerstone of our outreach efforts are now not possible, making outreach and fundraising more challenging. Hence, we have adapted our initiatives by moving them online; such as the online concert and eliciting donations through the giving.sg website. In the future, we would propose for the next batch to have more interaction with patients, perhaps through working with various hospitals by providing care packages that could facilitate 2-way interaction between youths and the blood disease patients without violating guidelines.

3.3 Scope of Impact

Raising of Awareness

Through our online fundraising concert, we managed to secure an average of 30-40 viewers per live session and more than 900 views afterwards. The estimated outreach for the event was then around 1000 youths. Thus, despite the challenges, we managed to raise the awareness of many youths aged 16-21 on marrow donation in Singapore.

Raising the Number of Donors

Despite the limitation faced of having a minimum age for marrow donation and our target audience falling short of this age, we have circumvented this problem by introducing 'Pledging Forms'. These forms give potential donors a chance to register for a cheek swab set which they would receive through post on their 18th birthday. This allows us to ensure a sustainable donor pool for years to come.

References:

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