

# Stem Cell Donation: Be The Difference

## BACKGROUND

- There's a significant shortage in donors within ethnic minorities. Only 37% of transplant recipients from minority ethnic backgrounds receive the best stem cell donor match, compared with nearly 72% for White European people<sup>(1)</sup>.
- Muslim Doctors Cymru (MDC) worked with Anthony Nolan to promote a community-partnership approach, to remove some of the barriers to donation.
- Our primary focus was to shed light on the stem cell donation inequity faced by ethnic minorities<sup>(2)</sup>, particularly within the Muslim community.

## STRATEGY

- MDC medical students, led by a pharmacist & GP, held clinics. Education provided to public, who then consented to swabs / join register.
- Targeted 16-30 age range for inclusion on the Anthony Nolan register.
- Over 30s are signposted/supported in clinic to join the DKMS register, using a QR code to order swab kits online.

## METHODS

- Social Media Campaign - short educational videos, infographics & posters were created. They provided information on blood cancer, its treatments, why you should donate & how to donate, with QR codes to order online swab kits.
- Webinar - to address cultural barriers, dispel misconceptions surrounding organ donation within Islamic teachings. Q&A sessions reassured people about the process of donating stem cells.
- Community engagement in Mosques - Swab clinics were held at two mosques in Cardiff. Further education was given, & consent gained before completing swabs for inclusion in the register.

## RESULTS

- Overall, 80 people received swab kits from the clinics and through online ordering.
- More healthcare professionals educated in supporting the recruitment of potential donors.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- A lack of awareness within ethnic minority communities – 'What is a stem cell?', 'Is it painful to donate?', 'best match is from similar ethnic background'.
- Urgent appeals raise awareness, but the chances of finding an unrelated donor match are low.
- Trusted voices are key to removing barriers related to faith – 'It is a gift of life, a form of charity and permissible to donate according to Islamic teachings'.
- A good uptake if students recruit students.
- The campaign resource #you2cansavelives well received on social media.

## CONCLUSION

- A culturally sensitive approach is important to promoting diversity on the register.
- Education sessions in mosques were well received- the participants really liked the idea of saving a life.  
**"Whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity" (Quran 5:32).**
- One donor said: "I always wanted to give to charity. This campaign taught me charity can be given in different ways".

## NEXT STEPS

- Continue to promote stem cell donation awareness and education at future MDC events.
- Collaborate with Keele university to connect with pharmacy students, & support undergraduate population health community initiatives.
- Raise awareness of stem cell donation with Pharmacy Foundation Trainees at study days with HEIW.
- Continue successful promotion during Ramadan- a month of fasting, reflection, giving charity (zakat).
- Present project findings at conferences: Pharmacy Show.

 @muslimdoccymru  
 @farzanamohamm20  
 Farzana.mohammed1@nhs.net

Join the stem  
cell register



[www.anthonynolan.org/help-save-a-life/join-stem-cell-register](http://www.anthonynolan.org/help-save-a-life/join-stem-cell-register)



**Author:** Farzana Mohammed, ICS Pharmacy Faculty Workforce Project Lead, H&W ICB

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### References:

1. UK Stem Cell Strategic Forum 'A ten year vision for stem cell transplantation and cellular therapies'
2. Report by All-Party Parliamentary Group: Ethnicity Transplantation and Transfusion 'Where are our Nation's donors?'