

8-MONTH-OLD WHO GAVE MARROW TO BROTHER, 2, IS NATION'S YOUNGEST DONOR

By Nozia Sayyed | Feb 17, 2014, 10.24 AM IST



Pune, long known for its cultural icons, can now boast of another outstanding performance — that of 18-month-old Rajnandini Sawant who, 10 months ago, donated bone marrow to her thalassemia-affected brother and is probably the country's youngest bone marrow transplant (BMT) donor.

While records with the New Delhi-based Bharat Stem Cell Registry show the youngest donor to be a four-year-old from Delhi, Dr Vijay Ramanan, haematologist with Ruby Hall Clinic who conducted the BMT between Rajnandini and her brother Prithviraj, then two-and-a-half years old, says the toddler

should be recorded as the youngest donor till date.

“The donor is from Pune and can be said to be the youngest among BMT donors in India. The patient, Prithviraj, was six months old when he was detected with thalassemia major. He was undergoing regular blood transfusions at the Sassoon General Hospital.

Prithviraj's physical condition was failing, and we noticed that his liver and spleen were bloated. With the parents' consent, we decided to use bone marrow taken from his sister, Rajnandini, who was then eight months old,” said Ramanan.

He added, “We successfully extracted bone marrow from Rajnandini and combined it with stem cells taken from her umbilical cord, which had been stored by her parents at the time of her birth.”

“This helped us save the patient and improve his quality of life. After the procedure, he has not undergone a single transplant till date and his haemoglobin count is now 14 grams, which had gone down to 8 grams at the time of the transplant.”

Ramanan's claim finds echo with Dr Mammen Chandy, director, Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata, who has carried out a majority of bone marrow transplants in India. He said, “In my knowledge, we have not seen anybody younger than this eight-month-old.”

Balasaheb Sawant, father to both Rajnandini and Prithviraj, said, “Our daughter is our saviour and in the true sense. She not only saved us from the financial burden we would have had to face, she also saved our son. She brought him back from the brink of death.”

He added, “Prithviraj had been undergoing transfusions at Sassoon since he was six months old. When we were told of bone marrow transplant and the chances of survival it gave, we decided to go for it. Our second child, Rajnandini, was announced free of genetic illnesses and taken to Dr Ramanan at Ruby Hall. Today, both my kids are fine and healthy.”

Sawant said Prithviraj was admitted on February 25, 2013 to Ruby Hall Clinic, and underwent the procedure on March 12 before being discharged on April 17, 2013. “Later, every weekly checkup at the hospital confirmed his improving health. It’s been a year since he underwent a blood transfusion,” he said.

Dr Vimarsh Raina, founder-director, Bharat Stem Cell Registry, said, “According to our registry, the youngest bone marrow donor in India is a four-year-old from Delhi who donated his marrow to his cancer-afflicted sibling.

The eight-month-old from Pune can be said to be the youngest among Indian donors and can be registered with us as well. These procedures involve parents and legal consents and will take time, but yes, she can be claimed to be the youngest.”

Raghu Rajagopal, chief executive officer, Datri Blood Stem Cell Donor Registry, Chennai, said, “In my experience, I have not heard of this young a bone marrow donor.”

Dr Navin Khattry, in-charge, Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, said, “We haven’t used anybody that young as a bone marrow donor. Our patients were above one and two years of age. In India, so far, we haven’t heard of such a small baby donating bone marrow.”

GALLERIES

