

# Donate bone marrow stem cells to save a life



**PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

**Janine le Roux (centre) from the Sunflower Fund with DUT students (from left) Nosipho Ncgobo, Suhana Jekmohan, Leigh-Anne Ngcobo and Nelly Khuzwayo encourage people to become bone marrow stem cell donors to help those suffering from leukaemia and other serious blood disorders to have a chance of living longer.**

## **ANNZRA NAIDOO**

ONE in 100 000. Those are the odds of finding a matching stem cell donor for a leukaemia patient in need of a transplant.

June is blood donor month, and the Sunflower Fund, the DUT's Steve Biko Campus and the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) are encouraging people to become bone marrow stem cell donors when they go and donate blood.

Matching a donor to a patient is very difficult. The DNA has to be similar and it is unlikely that a match will be found outside a patient's own ethnic group.

Stephanie Berry, spokesperson of the Sunflower Fund for the KZN region, said it is very important to increase the South African Bone Marrow Registry (SABMR) because of the difficulty of finding a matching donor.

The SABMR currently has 65 500 donors. The Sunflower Fund hopes that by educating people on this matter they can in-

crease the donor list. It only takes two test tubes of blood to become a donor, something that can easily be extracted while a person donates blood. If you are a match to a patient, no surgery is required to donate bone marrow stem cells. The process is just like donating blood, only it takes between four and six hours, and it can help people with many blood disorders and not just leukaemia.

Tarryn Corlett-Boden, the operations manager for the Sunflower Fund, says that even if you are rejected to donate blood, you may still be able to join the SABMR for the initial test.

The basic requirements to become a donor include being between 18 and 45 years old, weighing over 50 kg, with a body-mass index of over 30, and no history of sexually transmitted diseases. To find out more about being a donor, you can call the Sunflower Fund on their toll-free number at 080 012 1082 or visit [www.sunflowerfund.org.za](http://www.sunflowerfund.org.za)

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