

Sanofi raises stem cell transplants' awareness for cancer

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Singapore: Sanofi Oncology and BMT InfoNet are joining forces to inform patients and the public about the importance of stem cell transplants in the treatment of blood cancers. Stem cell transplantation, which infuses healthy stem cells into the bloodstream of a patient, is commonly used to treat various forms of blood cancers and disorders and is one-of-the-most important medical advances made in the last 50 years.

"When people hear the words stem cell transplant, there is a tendency to think about organizing local bone marrow drives to find a suitable donor if a relative is not a match. However, not everyone who could benefit from a stem cell transplant needs a donor," said Dr Parameswaran Hari, section head and director, Adult Blood and Marrow Transplant Program, and associate professor of medicine, division of hematology and oncology, Medical College of Wisconsin.

"In fact, the majority of stem cell transplants performed in the US are done in people using their own stem cells. We want to arm potential recipients with the facts so they can have an informed discussion with their physician should the need for a transplant arise," added Dr Hari.

While both types of stem cell transplants involve replacing diseased or damaged stem cells in the patient with healthy ones, the chosen type of transplant depends on the type of blood cancer, the health of the patient's own marrow, extent of bone marrow injury caused by prior chemotherapy treatments, and the overall health of the patient.

In an autologous transplant, the patient receives his or her own stem cells and is usually performed so that higher doses of

chemotherapy can be given to treat blood cancers such as multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, and amyloidosis. In an allogeneic transplant, the patient receives healthy stem cells from a well-matched donor to replace their own stem cells that have been damaged by disease such as myelodysplastic syndromes.