

Delivers First Stems Cells to Russian Patient

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The Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center delivered its first donation to a patient from Russia -- which will save his life. The chance of a match, between a Chinese donor from Taiwan and a Russian recipient, was more than a million to one.

On March 1, Dr. Golovacheva, received the precious bag of Hematopoietic Stem Cells (HSC) from Dr. Lin Jun-long, the chief executive of the Tzu Chi Medical Mission. She had made a long journey: "we were referred to Tzu Chi by a bone marrow registry in Germany," she said. "I flew more than ten hours to get here. I have been very careful to come here to receive the bone marrow." She said the Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) in different races were different: "in Russia, most of the marrow donors are from Europe and the Americas." It was the first time the Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center, based at the Tzu Chi Foundation's headquarters in Hualien, has provided material to a patient in Russia. The center is part of the Tzu Chi hospital. Since it was set up in 1993, the center has provided 2,417 donations of bone marrow and peripheral blood stem cells (PBSC) to patients in 28 countries. They are given to patients suffering from diseases of the blood, bone marrow and other kinds of cancer which are life-threatening.



Finding a match between donor and recipient is a complex and time-consuming business. Dr. Yang Guo-liang, deputy director of the Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center, said that the matching process focused on comparing the ten locus of A, B, C, DRB1, DQB1 in HLA between the patient and donor. "Usually, if 8 out of 10 locus match, the transplant can be performed. But, in this case, we found the ten locus all match. It is a chance of over one in a million. Especially because this is a case involving two races, it makes it even harder to find such match. This is really a karmic affinity. We hope the bag of HSC will help the patient recover."

As of March 1 this year, the center had 338,922 registered donors, including 9,209 in the United States, and a total of 24,871 patients who had requested a match. Of the transplants, 1,154 were of bone marrow and 1,262 of PBSC; 781 were in Taiwan and 1,635 abroad. The precious bag which the Russian doctor carried carefully with her back to Moscow will save a life.