

Event

World Marrow Donor Day to Honor Stem Cell Donors in Tehran

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Cite this article as: Shaiegan M, Pourfatollah AA. World Marrow Donor Day to Honor Stem Cell Donors in Tehran. *Arch Iran Med.* 2016; 19(12): 882 – 883.

World Marrow Donor Day (WMDD) was celebrated on September 17, 2016 (coinciding with 27 Shahrivar 1395 in Iranian calendar) at Tehran blood center in Tehran, Iran. This event was organized by the Iranian blood Transfusion Organization in collaboration with the Iranian National Stem Cell Donor Network (INSCDN), affiliated to the Ministry of Health. According to the WMDA (World Marrow Donor Association) website, this day (WMDD) is celebrated globally on the third Saturday of September in more than 50 countries around the world. At first, the campaign was held as a European event in Italy, Spain, France and Belgium, which was then expanded by the WMDA to a worldwide celebration in 2015.

Three main goals were considered in this celebration:

1- To honor and appreciate all hematopoietic stem cell donors (including related donors, unrelated donors, parents who donate their baby's cord blood, and volunteers who are waiting to donate their stem cells)

2- To promote the culture of stem cell donation in public society.

3- To encourage voluntary citizens or non-governmental organizations to help, fund and support stem cell donation and registries in the country.

A number of stem cell donors (Adult and cord blood donors) in recent years in Iran were appreciated during the ceremony.

The BMDW (Bone Marrow Donor Worldwide) database contains 28,796,748 donors and 705,134 cord blood units, according to the reports on BMDW website in November 2016.

Currently different registries are established for recruitment of stem cell donors in our country. The first registry for stem cell donation was established by the Iranian blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) in February 2009 and named the Iranian Stem Cell Donor Registry (ISCDR) or Sepas Center (in Farsi). IBTO is a national and nonprofit organization, affiliated to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran, responsible for the collection, processing, testing and distribution of blood

and blood products in Iran.¹ This organization requested the Minister of Health to fund and support IBTO to establish stem cell donor registry in May 2007. Finally IBTO was allowed to run and direct this registry in 2009 as a national project. ISCDR was named Sepas center, (meaning appreciation in Farsi) to reflect their gratitude to donors and volunteers. Therefore, ISCDR was established according to IBTO duties for donor recruitment and training to donate HSC to unrelated patients.² ISCDR is a national center for recruiting, training, and registering blood donors to maintain hematopoietic stem cell voluntary donation.

A couple of months later, the second registry in Iran was established in Hematology, Oncology, Stem cell Transplantation Research center in Shariati Hospital in Tehran by a grant obtained from Tehran University of Medical science.³ Subsequently, different local registries were activated in other universities of medical sciences and related research centers in cities of Tehran, Kermanshah, Tabriz and Mashhad. Then, INSCDN was founded, in early 2015 under the chairmanship of the Iranian Minister of Health, and the directing manager of IBTO was selected as the vice president of INSCDN. This organization was established to co-ordinate and monitor the activities of different registries in Iran. The main secretary office of INSCDN begun to work in 2015 later, in one of IBTO attached buildings near Tehran Blood Center in Vesal Avenue in Tehran (The Capital of Iran).

At the beginning, ISCDR activity was started in just one donor center in Tehran to recruit the blood donors who were willing to donate their stem cells to unrelated patients in ISCDR, but gradually ISCDR began to grow. Currently, in addition to three donor centers in north, west and center parts of Tehran, ISCDR donor centers are actively developed in 15 other provinces of Iran and 5 other donor recruitment centers are going to start their activity during autumn (Figure 1). These donor centers are actively involved in recruiting volunteers among blood donors. All donors are taught by trained physicians to have general information about stem cell, stem cell donation and different administrative processes in ISCDR. A signed consent form is obtained from each donor, then donors' demographic information are recorded in ISCDR software and blood samples are taken. HLA-A/B/DRβ1 alleles are typed by molecular methods and recorded in ISCDR database.

To promote ISCDR activity, IBTO is going to develop donor centers in all 31 provinces of Iran and increase donor numbers to 50,000 during the next year.

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Accepted for publication: 10 November 2016

