



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MILLER-KEYSTONE BLOOD CENTER LAUNCHING “HOPE FOR A MATCH” RARE DONOR PROGRAM

LEHIGH VALLEY, PA – Officials at Miller-Keystone Blood Center (MKBC) have announced the establishment of its “Hope for a Match” Rare Donor Program. This program is designed to help ensure that the right blood type is available at the right time for transfusion patients identified as having rare blood types.

“Typically, a rare donor is one whose red blood cells have been tested and found to lack certain antigens which together make the blood unique,” explains D. Kip Kuttner, D.O., Vice President & Medical Director, MKBC. “Certain patients need blood from a rare donor because they have produced red cell antibodies and require a more specific match than simply just A, B or O.”

“Maintaining a genetically matched and safe blood supply is a priority because of its importance to the people who need it to live,” says Deb Otto, Director of Donor Resources, MKBC. “A diverse blood supply helps ensure that a wide variety of blood types are available for those in need.”

Ms. Otto continues, “Like the color of one’s eyes or hair, blood type is also inherited. For example, African-Americans and other minority groups may have rare blood types that are specific to their race, ethnicity or genetic background. The best blood-type match for patients with rare blood types often comes from donors of a similar race or ethnicity. By diversifying the blood supply, we can instill hope and save more lives.”

MKBC’s Qiana Cressman, Donor Resources Mobile Recruiter adds, “Our local blood donors, community leaders and MKBC’s staff all play a vital role in creating awareness and ensuring the success of the Hope For A Match Program. We are excited to expand our reach and engage more ethnically diverse donors to help MKBC maintain a safe and adequate blood supply.”

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- - Miller-Keystone Blood Center continued - -

Dr. Kuttner confirms that the best match for chronically ill patients in need of regular blood transfusions will likely come from donors of the same ethnic background, as patients battling life-threatening illnesses are less likely to have reactions to blood donated by someone within their own ethnic group or similar genetics. Use of genetically matched blood products will decrease the risk of complications related to transfusion treatment.

Quick Facts:

- Sickle Cell Disease is the most common genetic disease in the U.S. affecting 100,000 Americans. A low level of oxygen in the cells causes cells to take on a distorted shape and become stiff, sticky and hard. Patients have too little oxygen transported through the body. The "sickled cells" clog within blood vessels, damage vital organs, often causing severe pain, inflammation, stroke or even death.
- 1 in 365 African-American newborns have sickle cell disease and 1 in 16,300 Hispanic-American newborns have sickle cell disease.
- 1 in 13 African-Americans carry the sickle cell trait; 1 in 100 Hispanic-Americans carry the sickle cell trait
- Sickle Cell patients can receive from 10 to 100 pints of blood annually.
- Red blood cells carry markers or proteins called "antigens" on their surface that determine one's blood type. There are more than 600 known antigens, and some are unique to specific racial and ethnic groups.

Dr. Kuttner confirms that MKBC is a member of the American Rare Donor Program (ARDP). There are over 80 organizations in the United States that participate in ARDP, and when a rare blood type is requested for a patient, the database can be searched to locate compatible donors to ensure the patient receives compatible blood. Over 94% of patients get the matched blood they require, however more diverse donors are still needed, as the need is growing.

"Less than 3% of blood donations in the US come from African-American and Hispanic-American donors" Ms. Otto notes. "It is vital that the blood supply reflect the diversity of our community. A diverse blood supply ensures the best care for patients with rare blood types in need of lifesaving blood transfusions."

To schedule a donation, call 800-B-A-DONOR (223-6667) or visit GIVEaPINT.org; or for more information on MKBC's Rare Donor Program, call 800-B-A-DONOR and ask to speak with Deb Otto or Qiana Cressman.

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