

Jeni is after your marrow

by Verna Costello

HERE are 250 people in Australia, and hundreds worldwide, who suffer from leukaemia, aplastic anaemia and other bone marrow disorders.

They are searching for bone marrow donors—and if a compatible match can be found, a transplant can take place.

Since the WA Red Cross started its Bone Marrow Registry in 1991, about 7,500 Western Australians have enrolled.

There is, however, only a slender chance of being matched to a patient. To date, only twenty WA donors have been matched, and donated bone marrow.

CALM part-time nature conservation planning officer Jeni Alford is one of those who have registered and donated bone marrow.

Jeni, a blood donor for more than 15 years says that anyone in good health between the ages of 18 and 50 years, can register on the bone marrow registry.

"All it takes is a small sample of blood to determine bone marrow type, and, if called upon to donate, your marrow could be sent to a patient anywhere in the world," she said.

Jeni enrolled onto the Bone Marrow Registry two years ago, and six months ago she was asked if she would like to donate marrow to help a young child.

"I was in hospital for a day and a night, and despite not being overly fond of hospitals, nor the prospect of being anaesthetised, I found that it wasn't at all painful," she said.

"It took a few weeks to feel like running a mara-

thon, but no more than I'd have felt after a normal blood donation.

"Two progress reports since the bone marrow transplant took place have showed that the patient is doing very well and has been discharged from hospital.

"In ten months' time, if the parents, the child and I agree, we all can meet!

"I know a lot of CALM

staff are blood donors, and I'd like to see them carry this a step further and be placed on the bone marrow registry.

"Who knows, you might one day experience the thrill of saving someone's life.

Because Australia is multicultural, the Red Cross is particularly interested in people of ethnic origin other than Anglo Saxon-Celtic—it seems different races can have different bone marrow types—but whatever your background, there can't be

too many on the registry.

Simply phone the Australian Red Cross (Western Australia) Bone Marrow Donor Registry on (09) 325 3333 for further information.

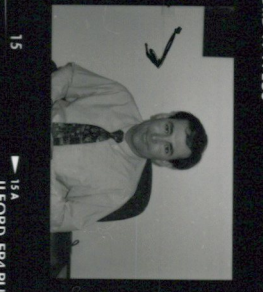
"Then go for it and bleed for someone in need!" Jeni said.

Another CALM staff member who has enrolled in the Bone Marrow Match Registry, is herbarium priority flora surveyor Diana Papenfus. She endorses Jeni's plea to other staff to 'be in it'.



Jeni Alford—keen to see more marrow donors. Photo by Verna Costello

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