



**30 YEARS DKMS**  
We celebrate life every day!

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **DKMS Celebrates 30 Years: Major Milestone for Blood Cancer Patients**

- **More than 10.7 million registered donors and 92,000 donations made**
- **Patients now have better access to transplantation**

**New York, NY, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – On May 28, 2021, DKMS will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Founded in Germany in 1991, DKMS began as a small family initiative and later established itself as a non-profit blood stem cell donor center. Today, DKMS is an international organization with a clear message: blood cancer knows no borders. It is this message that is behind DKMS's increasing commitment to ensure patients in India, South Africa, and other developing regions of the world also have access to life-saving stem cell transplants. To celebrate its anniversary and mark the annual World Blood Cancer Day (WBCD), DKMS wants to raise awareness around its life-saving work among young people in particular, and encourage them to register as donors.

*"With over 10.7 million donors available worldwide and over 92,000 second chances at life given, DKMS has made one of the biggest impacts in the lives of patients across the world,"* explains **Dr. Elke Neujahr**, Global CEO of DKMS. *"To ensure the best chance of survival for our patients, we continue to expand our efforts, not only by enlarging and diversifying the global pool of donors, but by driving science and research."* In recent years, DKMS has grown into the world's leading donor pool network, with sites in seven countries on five continents. The latest addition is DKMS Africa, established in March 2021 and based in South Africa. The DKMS family now supports more people than ever before.

#### **Virtual anniversary event with a host of celebrities and supporters**

On May 28, DKMS will celebrate its landmark anniversary with an online jubilee event. The show will be streamed live from Café Moscow in Berlin beginning at 1:30pm EST and will be available to watch via [www.dkms.org/30years](http://www.dkms.org/30years). Patients, donors, and supporters will tell their stories, with the host of the evening, German TV presenter **Matthias Killing**. Guests will include DKMS founder **Dr. Peter Harf**, the TV presenter and journalist **Eva Imhof**, singer and songwriter **Michael Patrick Kelly**, and **Michael Mronz**, long-term supporter and widower of the former German Foreign Minister **Dr. Guido Westerwelle**, who suffered from leukemia.

The DKMS story began in 1991, when Peter Harf was fighting to save the life of his beloved wife, Mechtild. The only way **Mechtild Harf** could beat her leukemia was with a stem cell transplant – but Germany had only 3,000 registered potential stem cell donors at the time. In a desperate situation, Peter took things into his own hands, joining forces with Mechtild's treating physician, **Gerhard Ehninger**, to found DKMS gGmbH in Tübingen.

*“We made great strides in our initial efforts, increasing the size of the registry twenty-fold in the first year. Sadly though, we could not help Mechtild and she ultimately passed away. Before she did, she made me promise to continue the work we were doing, so that other families could be saved from the pain we’d felt and other patients could have a second chance at life,” says Peter Harf. “As I reflect on the accomplishments of the past three decades and think of all the lives that have been saved and families who have been kept together, I am happy in the realization that, if I am to be remembered for anything, it will be for DKMS.”*

### **Helping where help is needed: Improving access to transplantation**

Today, DKMS is on a global mission and active in many areas including medicine and research. Every 27 seconds someone, somewhere in the world is diagnosed with blood cancer, and many of these patients are unable to find a suitable "genetic twin". Most rely on stem cell donations from unrelated donors whose relevant tissue characteristics are the closest possible match to their own. These characteristics are also influenced by ethnic origin and vary from region to region – making it vital for the database to include as many people from different ethnic backgrounds as possible.

*“Over the past thirty years, our experts have accumulated a wealth of knowledge in the field of stem cell donation and transplantation,” says Dr. Elke Neujahr. “Today, as a network of thirteen subsidiaries, we have grown to become an international and multifaceted organization, that is able to fight blood cancer and life-threatening blood disorders from many different angles. Together, we are consistently developing the scope of our activities to help patients – and together, we will continue to fight, until our common dream of a world without blood cancer or blood disorders becomes a reality.”*

For example, DKMS has launched special aid programs to give patients in less fortunate parts of the world access to stem cell transplants by offering financial support, free HLA typing, and support for treatment and care, among other things.

### **A show of solidarity on World Blood Cancer Day (WBCD)**

WBCD is primarily about educating and informing young people on the impact they can have on the lives of blood cancer patients. Their support is especially important, as young people tend to be healthy and are often more likely to be considered as donors for medical reasons. **This year in the US, DKMS is launching its first roundtable featuring some of the key players that make a stem cell transplant happen: a cancer survivor, a donor, an oncologist, a search coordinator and a DKMS donor recruiter. They share their expertise on the process of stem cell donation..** Find out more at <http://dkms.org/WBCD>.

#### **About DKMS**

DKMS is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Founded in Germany in 1991 by Dr. Peter Harf, DKMS and the organization's over 900 employees have since relentlessly pursued the aim of giving as many patients as possible a second chance at life. With over 10 million registered donors, DKMS has succeeded in doing this more than 92,000 times to date by providing blood stem cell donations to those in need. This accomplishment has led to DKMS becoming the global leader in the facilitation of unrelated blood stem cell transplants. The organization has offices in Germany, the US, Poland, the UK, Chile, and South Africa. In India, DKMS has founded the joint venture DKMS-BMST together with the Bangalore Medical Services Trust. International expansion and collaboration are key to helping patients worldwide because, like the organization itself, blood cancer knows no borders.

DKMS is also heavily involved in the fields of medicine and science, with its own research unit focused on continually improving the survival and recovery rate of patients. In its high-performance laboratory, the DKMS Life Science Lab, the organization sets worldwide standards in the typing of potential blood stem cell donors.