

## South Asians to the aid of blood cancer victims in US

July 22, 2007 11:05:06 AM IST

NEW YORK -- Internet, blogging, YouTube and the like have helped friends of a young Indian American doctor, battling a killer disease himself, enlist over 17,000 South Asian bone marrow donors to save victims like him.

Encouraged by the initial response from the South Asian community, friends of 28-year old Vinay Chakravarthy, diagnosed with a disease known as Acute Myelogenous Leukaemia (AML), a fast-growing cancer of the blood and bone marrow, now plan to register 50,000 donors by Aug 20.

Made up of Vinay's friends and family across the country, Team Vinay encourages people to believe in "The Power of One" and to "Become a Committed Donor" with one of the ongoing nationwide drives.

The campaign has conducted 283 bone marrow drives in 20 states to help South Asians who have a one in 20,000 probability of finding a matching donor compared to Caucasians who have a one in 15 chance of finding one.

Attending his first donor drive in New York City, Vinay said: "We are making significant progress but more must be done. A few moments of your time can provide a lifetime of moments for patients like me. The 'Power of One' speaks to all of us."

Team Vinay, enthusiastic and driven to make this campaign a success with today's communication tools, is spreading the word by setting up the [www.helpvinay.org](http://www.helpvinay.org) website, streamlining videos and running public service announcements with well-known actors in the South Asian media.

They are also circulating emails to register, posting [www.helpvinay.org](http://www.helpvinay.org) banners, blogging, directly marketing to South Asians across the nation,

and airing messages from well wishers through the use of viral video on YouTube and [www.rapouts.com](http://www.rapouts.com).

In the last one month, over 250,000 people have viewed the video clips. Vinay also received a letter of support from Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama. There has been an outpouring of support from the Indian diaspora. International media, including Indian media, are also following the story closely.

"Friends and family of Vinay are saving lives by raising awareness of the need for South Asians to join the Registry," said Steve Lovelace, director of recruitment and community development of the National Marrow Donor Programme.

"They've done a commendable job by spreading awareness on local, national and international levels."

On any given day, there are 6,000 patients searching the Registry for a match.

A resident in orthopaedics at Boston Medical Centre, Vinay returns to the hospital this week where he will undergo chemotherapy for one month prior to transplant. He was married in 2005 to Rashmi, a medical student at Boston University.