# The journey of survival: How an 18-year-old overcame leukaemia through stem cell donation



Abraham Treuhaft, an 18-year-old from Salford, faced an unexpected and life-changing diagnosis in June 2017. An avid runner capable of completing a 10K in 40 minutes and a college student in the North East of England, Treuhaft initially believed he had merely contracted a virus after returning from a trip to Italy. However, his mother observed a significant change in his appearance; his skin had turned yellow, and he experienced dizziness while climbing stairs. This prompted a visit to the GP, where subsequent tests revealed a more severe diagnosis: acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL), a blood cancer that originates in the white blood cells of the bone marrow.

Following his diagnosis, Treuhaft was referred to The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester, where medical professionals recommended a stem cell transplant. An international search for a compatible donor was initiated while Treuhaft underwent four rounds of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. The treatments caused severe physical and emotional challenges for the teenager, who recounted, “Nothing prepares you for such events…I wasn’t a single part of my body that wasn’t affected by the cancer and gave me pain.”

After roughly four and a half months, a suitable donor named Roy Horn was identified. Horn, who was living in Israel and sharing a Jewish heritage with Treuhaft, was a perfect 10/10 match based on the ten essential genetic markers required for donation. Despite the compatibility, Treuhaft's body attempted to reject the stem cells, necessitating two years of anti-rejection medication and a difficult recovery process. At one point, doctors informed him that he had just four weeks left to live. Fortunately, Treuhaft's condition improved as his body eventually accepted the transplant.

The bond between Treuhaft and his donor culminated in a deeply emotional meeting when he travelled to Israel, a year after the two-year waiting period that allows for donor-recipient interactions in the UK. Roy Horn reflected on the experience, stating, “When I signed up to be a stem cell donor I don’t think I truly realised the significance of what it meant in terms of saving someone’s life… it felt good to meet Abraham.”

Now, Treuhaft has embraced life with renewed vigour, having visited over 80 countries since 2019, including destinations such as Norway, Japan, Zimbabwe, and Brazil. He has also recently married his wife, Jade, and expressed a desire to live each day to the fullest. “This might sound strange but getting cancer is the best thing that has ever happened to me. It’s made me who I am,” Treuhaft stated. His ordeal has led him to mentor young boys, offering insights derived from his own experiences, which he believes has fostered a deeper respect from those he works with.

Charitable organisations like the Love Hope Strength Foundation collaborate with blood cancer charity DKMS to encourage more people to join the stem cell register. The DKMS holds the UK’s largest register of potential stem cell donors and emphasises the ongoing need for donors, noting that approximately 2,000 people in the UK at any given time require a stem cell transplant. Currently, there is a significant gap in matching potential patients, with about 60% of those needing transplants able to find suitable donors.

Individuals aged between 17 and 55 can join the register after completing a health questionnaire. The procedure to collect stem cells typically involves extracting them from the bloodstream, akin to giving blood, which are then transplanted into the patient in a procedure similar to a blood transfusion.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/acute-lymphoblastic-leukaemia/> - Corroborates the description of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) as a blood cancer originating in the white blood cells of the bone marrow.
* <https://www.christie.nhs.uk/> - Provides information about The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in Manchester, where Abraham Treuhaft received medical treatment.
* <https://www.dkms.org.uk/en> - Supports the role of DKMS in maintaining the UK's largest register of potential stem cell donors and their efforts to encourage more donors.
* <https://www.nohs.gov.uk/conditions-and-treatments/cancer/stem-cell-transplants/> - Explains the process of stem cell transplantation and its importance for treating blood cancers.
* <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/stem-cell-transplants/types-of-transplant> - Provides details about the different types of stem cell transplants and their applications in treating various cancers.