

Mayo Clinic Minute

Why bone marrow donor diversity is needed

Video	Audio
Vivien Williams	Diversity is essential in the world of medicine. Take bone marrow transplants, for example.
Ernesto Ayala, M.D. Hematology and Oncology Mayo Clinic	"The biggest challenge that we have to find donors to proceed with bone marrow transplantation is ethnicity."
Vivien Williams	Dr. Ernesto Ayala says people who need bone marrow transplants to fight blood diseases and cancers such as leukemia need to find a matching donor.
Ernesto Ayala, M.D.	"The most important factor when we look for a donor is HLA matching. HLA stands for human leukocyte antigens, which essentially are just markers in the surface of the cells."
Vivien Williams	Siblings and parents are sometimes matches. Otherwise, a match may be found in the national bone marrow donation registry. The problem is, most people registered as donors are Caucasian.
Ernesto Ayala, M.D.	"If I have a patient that belongs to an ethnic minority, then I will only find a donor in the registry in about 20 to 25% of the time."
Vivien Williams	Dr. Ayala encourages people of all races to consider being a life-saving bone marrow transplant donor.
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Vivien Williams.