

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Mixed-Race Patients Lack Donors

Finding a match proves difficult

(AP)—If Nick Glasgow were white, he would have a nearly

90 percent chance of finding a matching bone marrow donor who could cure his leukemia.

But because the 28-year-old bodybuilder is one-quarter Japanese, his doctor warned him the outlook was grim. Glasgow's background would



Nick Glasgow, who has Leukemia, is comforted by his mother Carole Wiegand at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Hayward, Calif. Glasgow's multicultural background makes it almost impossible to find a bone marrow match to treat the leukemia. (AP Photo)

race donors. So far, multiracial volunteers make up just 3 percent of the 7 million people on the registry.

That is higher than the percentage of mixed-race people in the U.S. But there are so many possible racial and ethnic combinations that finding a match can still be extremely difficult.

The reason that mixed-heritage patients are so hard to match can be found in the immune system.

Populations in different parts of the world developed certain proteins, or markers, that are part of the body's natural defenses. These markers help the immune system determine which cells are foreign and should be rejected.

A match between two people who share many markers will reduce the risk of the donor and recipient cells attacking each other. Because certain markers tend to cluster in particular ethnic groups, matches are most often found among people of shared backgrounds. Multiracial patients often have uncommon profiles and a much harder time finding a donor.

About 6,000 patients in the U.S. are awaiting a bone marrow match.

make it almost impossible to find a match, which usually comes from a patient's own ethnic group.

The doctor "didn't say it would be hard. He said 'zero chance,'" Glasgow's mother, Carole Wiegand, recalled with tears in her eyes. "When Nick heard that, it sent him plummeting."

At a time when the number of multiracial Americans is rising, only a tiny fraction of do-

nors on the national bone-marrow registry are of mixed race. The National Marrow Donor Program is trying to change that by seeking more diverse donors for patients suffering from leukemia, lymphoma and other blood diseases.

"The truth is, when people of different backgrounds marry and produce offspring, it creates more types that are harder to match," said Michelle Setterholm, the program's director of scientific services. "The

probability just gets lower when you have people of mixed ancestral DNA."

The number of people who identify themselves as multiracial in the United States has grown from 3.9 million in 2000, the first year the census included the category, to 5.2 million in 2008. Mixed-race people account for 1.6 percent of the U.S. population.

The donor program has been pushing for years to recruit more racial minorities and mixed-

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## Local Senior Accepts Crown

Tessie Taylor of northeast Portland graciously accepted her sash and crown as she was named the 2009 Rose Queen for Marquis Companies, a provider of skilled nursing, long-term care and assisted living services.

The recent event celebrates the lives of senior ladies who currently make their home in a Marquis facility. Twenty-three remarkable senior ladies from various Marquis facilities were recognized for their volunteer and community service contributions.

Tessie was chosen because of her dedication to children and her community. Doctors call her a "miracle patient" after medically dying three times last year from

heart failure and having to be resuscitated; persevering through with no brain damage.

However, Tessie is accustomed to hard circumstances. On May 9, 1921 Tessie was born, of all places, in a boxcar where she lived for three months while her father worked with the railway.

Tessie now makes her residence at Vintage Suites at Piedmont in northeast Portland where she gives any child who visits a new teddy bear wrapped in a homemade blanket. She says, "It makes me happy to make others happy."

The 2002 Miss America and Oregon native Katie Harman hosted the event.



The 2002 Miss America and Oregon native Katie Harman crowns Tessie Taylor of northeast Portland the 2009 Rose Queen for Marquis Companies, a skilled nursing and assisted living provider.

## OHSU Targets West Nile Virus

Researchers at Oregon Health & Science University have received federal funding to develop a vaccine for West Nile Virus that will likely be ready

to enter clinical trials within the next 3 years.

To date, there is no existing human vaccine for West Nile. Funding for the research

comes from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a component of the National Institutes of Health.

"This grant shows the solid commitment of the NIH to improving human health through the development of new and improved vaccines," said Mark Slifka, an associate scientist at OHSU's Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute.

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## HEALTH WATCH

**Treating Carpel Tunnel** -- A free presentation on Carpel Tunnel and other nerve disorders is presented by the Providence Brain Institute on Thursday, June 25 at 7 p.m. at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Souther Auditorium. Register online at providence.org/classes or call 503-574-6595.

**Cardiac-Rehab Exercises** -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

**Parenting Workshop** -- Are you struggling with parenting a "challenging" child? Kaiser hosts a parenting workshop on Tuesday, June 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the North Interstate Building, 7201 N. Interstate Ave. Fee is \$20 for Kaiser member couples and \$25 for nonmember couples.

**Red Cross Continuing Education** -- The Oregon Trail Chapter Red Cross now offers credits to helps professionals maintain licensing or certification. For a cumulative list, visit pdxinfo.net.

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