



SNMA

STUDENT NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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How far will you “Drive for Uzo”?

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Uzoma Azuh took the year off from the Wayne State University School of Medicine. He was not taking the time off because he was tired and overstressed from the pressures of medical school. The 23-year-old Canadian resident of Nigerian descent faced a much more daunting task: fighting Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML), a fast moving type of cancer where bone marrow produces defective infection-fighting cells.

Uzo underwent seven rounds of chemotherapy all the while searching for a bone marrow donor who provided Uzo his last chance at life. On August 13, Uzo lost his battle with AML still holding on to the hope of finding a bone marrow donor.

The National Marrow Donor Program is a worldwide hub for marrow donor registration with more than 5.5 million potential donors willing to donate marrow or blood cells to any patient, anywhere in the world. According to the NMDP, a transplant requires matching tissue types between patient and donor. These tissue types are inherited, but 70% of patients do not have a matched donor in their family.

None of Uzo’s direct family was a close enough marrow match, so he began the search for members of his Nigerian extended family in hope of finding a donor there. While the odds are slim of finding a match in the immediate family, patients like Uzo will have a better chance of finding a donor within their ethnic group.

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Drive for Uzo

Unfortunately for Uzo and other African-Americans in grave need of marrow and blood cell transplants, the number of African-American donors on the NMDP registry is pitifully small. According to the University of Chicago Hospital, only 370,000 of the donors on the American NDMP list are African-American, compared to the 2.2 million Caucasian donors on the American registry.

Uzo was a member of Student National Medical Association's Wayne State University chapter. The Student National Medical Association is committed to supporting current and future underrepresented minority medical students, addressing the needs of underserved communities, and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent and socially conscious physicians.

SNMA will be hosting blood drives at various chapters nationwide with the goal of utilizing its strong minority membership base to add other ethnicities to the NDMP registry list in honor of Uzo and to help others who share his dire situation.

For more information about how to become a donor or how to participate in the SNMA 2006 Tissue Organ Donation, Education and Recruitment Program marrow "Drive for Uzo", please contact SNMA Vice President Christina Twyman at vicepresident@snma.org For more information about Uzo's struggle, visit his donor site, www.donorcorner.com.

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