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## The Sunflower Fund becomes DKMS Africa in historic global partnership for blood cancer patients

**A historic partnership between an iconic South African non-profit organisation and its global counterpart is set to change the course for patients with life threatening blood disorders following the amalgamation of the two organisations.**

DKMS Africa, formerly known as The Sunflower Fund is a donor recruitment centre and stem cell registry. The South African based stem cell organisation is building an ethnically diverse registry that is representative of all people of African and mixed ethnic descent.

Dr Elke Neujahr, the DKMS Global CEO says, “With DKMS Africa, we are now present in seven countries on five continents. In fact, from the first moment we met the South African Executive Country Director, Alana James, we knew we were the perfect match”.

DKMS is an international NGO with 30 years’ experience in fighting blood cancer. Over its three decades of existence, the organisation has registered more than 10.5 million donors and has one of the most diverse donor pools in the world.

Neujahr continued, “A donor match could come from anywhere in the world, thus it is important that we expand our international reach. For a second chance at life, we cross borders, collaborate globally and leave no stone unturned to help patients – regardless of their geographic location. Every patient deserves that chance. Only together we can make a big impact in the lives of patients with blood disorders in South Africa and across the globe.”

For many patients diagnosed with blood cancer or a life-threatening blood disorder such as Leukaemia, Thalassaemia or Sickle Cell Disease their only hope of survival is a blood stem cell transplant from a matching donor. Only one third of patients find a matching donor in their own family. The majority therefore depends on an unrelated donor. In South Africa, every five minutes someone is diagnosed with a blood disorder.

Alana James said; “Our mission remains to give South African blood cancer patients and patients across the continent a second chance at life. Already, our partnership with DKMS has born great benefits to our operations and has greatly boosted our capacity. We look forward to benefiting from DKMS’s wealth of expertise in the field of science and research, and in creating awareness.”



WE DELETE BLOOD CANCER

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She added that “People of African origin have unique tissue typing/DNA and are severely under-represented on the global database. In respect, South Africa’s rainbow nation is at a distinct disadvantage, requiring a large pool of prospective donors.”

Each new donor registering with DKMS Africa is typed at high resolution for a wide selection of genetic markers. This selection is made possible by the cost-efficient, high-throughput, next-generation sequencing workflow as implemented by the DKMS Life Science Lab. The reason for doing this is simple: to provide the most efficient and detailed donor selection process for transplant and search coordinators around the globe and to ensure that every patient in need of a transplant is able to find the most suitable donor as quickly as possible.

Concluding, James said “the most important part of the partnership is that it centres the patient at the core of all operations.”

Ends.

#### **About DKMS**

DKMS is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancer. Founded in Germany in 1991 by Dr. Peter Harf, DKMS and the organization’s 1.000 employees have since relentlessly pursued the aim of giving as many patients as possible a second chance at life. With over 10.5 million registered donors, DKMS has succeeded in doing this more than 91,000 times to date by providing blood stem cell donations to those in need. This accomplishment has led to DKMS becoming the global leader in the facilitation of unrelated blood stem cell transplants. The organization has offices in Germany, the US, Poland, the UK, Chile and South Africa. In India, DKMS has founded the joint venture DKMS-BMST together with the Bangalore Medical Services Trust. International expansion and collaboration are key to helping patients worldwide because, like the organization itself, blood cancer knows no borders.

DKMS is also heavily involved in the fields of medicine and science, with its own research unit focused on continually improving the survival and recovery rate of patients. In its high-performance laboratory, the DKMS Life Science Lab, the organization sets worldwide standards in the typing of potential blood stem cell donors.

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