

Operation Save Jack

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Jack's Story

nance internship at Visa in San Francisco. He had signed up for martial arts classes and was living at home for the summer in Cupertino before heading back to UCLA to finish up his degree studying Economics and Accounting.

But Jack had begun to feel some leg pain prior to the internship and hadn't thought much of it. Not wanting to give a bad impression, he gritted his teeth and continued going to work on painkillers. But six weeks into the program, the pain was starting to take its toll—Jack could not move his legs or stand

Jack Chin is dying of leukemia. He needs an immediate bone marrow transplant to survive. Here's his story.

"You know what sucks? When you realize that most of your classmates from high school are doing things that they said they always wanted to do, and you are stuck looking at a wall full of pamphlets that say 'Cancer and You' and 'Understanding Leukemia.'"

23-year-old Jack Chin has always been determined. Since he was in elementary school, all Jack wanted was to serve in the military for his country. West Point was the goal and sure enough, Jack made it happen despite a setback of being denied admission his senior year at Monta Vista High School. After studying at the University of California, Los Angeles for a year, Jack was admitted to West Point where he endured tough tests of his physical strength and courage—rappelling off cliffs, boxing against former infantryman and riding in tanks. After a year at West Point and a couple failed gymnastics classes (which he now laughs about), Jack decided to withdraw and return to UCLA, but not without a few powerful life lessons under his belt.

Fast forward to summer 2011. With just one year left before graduation at UCLA, Jack was looking forward to a good summer. He had just secured a prestigious and very competitive fi-



up. In July, he finally received MRI scans and a blood test. The diagnosis? Acute lymphoblastic leukemia. He was rushed to the hospital that same day where he stayed for a month.

After several months of treatment, pills and chemotherapy, Jack's doctors have come to a disturbing conclusion: Jack needs a bone marrow transplant or he will die. His family's bone marrow and even the bone marrow of his twin brother Jim have not been a match.

Friends and family have mobilized to plan bone marrow drives, with a focus on attracting people of Chinese descent as matches are more likely the closer the ethnicity. The odds of an unrelated person being a match for Jack are 1 in 20,000, but the hope is that



with enough momentum, a match will be found.

"Plain and simple, the only way Jack can find a match to save his life is if one appears in the bone marrow reg-

istry. There is no other way for him to get through this. No amount of positive, wishful thinking, encouraging Facebook notes, or sympathy will do anything to change the fact that if people don't register, my brother is not going to make it," Jim says.

Jack hopes to finish his degree and apply to jobs doing consulting or financial analyst work. He has not given up on his dream of serving his country. Eventually, he would like to attend grad school and enter the FBI or foreign service.

Jack says, "The thing I remember most about West Point was that there was always someone there to help turn a bad moment into a funny memory, and no matter how bad it sucked, it would eventually come to pass. I never thought I would apply this to cancer, but I'm hoping it will be the same."



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The facts on bone marrow transplants

Facts

- Jack needs a bone marrow transplant to survive.
- The chance of a completely unrelated person being a match is 1 in 20,000.
- Patients are most likely to find a match among donors with the most similar ethnic background. Hence, Jack's most likely match will be Chinese.
- While white patients have an almost 90 percent chance of finding a match, the chance of a minority patient finding a match is only about 45 percent.
- On average, one in every 540 members of Be The Match Registry in the United States will be matched and go on to donate bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cells to a patient.
- A bone marrow transplant is a life-saving treatment for people with life-threatening diseases like blood cancers like leukemia and lymphoma, sickle cell, etc.
- Marrow donors are typically sought among family members first. But approximately 70 percent of patients needing a transplant do not have a family member who is a compatible donor.
- Many on the bone marrow registry can't be located or will not donate when asked. According to the Institute for Justice, the percentages of donors who are available and willing are: 65 percent for Caucasians; 47 percent for Hispanics; 44 percent for Asians; 34 percent for African-Americans.
- Only about seven percent of those on the national bone marrow registry are Asian.

Getting on the registry and donating

- A common misconception is that registering for the bone marrow registry involves giving blood. However, all it takes is a simple cheek swab and a quick form.
- Registered donors must be between ages 18 and 60.
- Those interested in registering can request a free cheek swab kit in the mail at Be The Match (<http://join.bethematch.org/jack>). All you have to do is swab your cheek and mail the kit back to get on the registry.
- To look for a bone marrow drive near you to register in person and get on the registry faster, search here: [http://marrow.org/Join/Join in Person/Join in Person.aspx](http://marrow.org/Join/Join_in_Person/Join_in_Person.aspx).
- Thanks to advances in bone marrow, no surgery is necessary for donating. Donating bone marrow is much like donating blood. Blood is taken from the arm and the necessary bone marrow is immediately centrifuged out; the blood is then immediately sent back to the donor. A video of the process can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEoJwcdV3BQ>

How you can help

Register. Start a bone marrow drive in your own community (<http://www.aadp.org/hold-a-registration-drive/>)
Spread the word. The more people we get to register, the better Jack's chances of finding a match are.

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Thoughts from Jack



I haven't thought a lot about cancer to be honest. The whole thing just happened so fast that I never really reflected much on how I just got cheated by life.

It is only the more I think about it the more pissed off I get. It is really hard to be upbeat.

People say "Stay strong!" and "You'll be fine," "You'll make it through this." I know they are trying to make me feel better and think that encouragement is the way to go, but really it's not.

I'm often reminded of the movie 50/50, which I thought was great. In it, Joseph Gordon-Levitt's character who has cancer says, "People say you'll be okay, but it's not okay."

Exactly. NO, I do not know if I will make it. NOBODY knows.

I was told that chemo would work, and then I find out it won't be effective for me. I was told I was standard risk...only to find out later that I am high risk with possible mixed disease. I feel like I don't believe in a GOD anymore. The truth is, you're either lucky or you're not, you either suffer or you don't, you either die or you make it.

Sometimes I only say brave or humorous things to sound positive for others. The truth is, I'm not some cover-of-Oprah, Lance Armstrong kind of guy. I am bitter, scared, and depressed—hardly a source of inspiration.

I totally hate emo ppl who say things like "Life is pain," "Life sucks," or "I'm tired of living" when in reality they do not have any real problems in their life.

Because when the day comes when something bad happens in their life, it truly will suck no matter how much you don't want it. I remember every time I had to get a needle shot into my spinal cord, and how much that hurt, right before the doctor stuck the needle, I remember thinking what it would be like to just run out of there, but I couldn't. I just have to do it, no matter how much it sucks.



It's a certain weird feeling when you are at the hospital and you look at the high school volunteers there, and you realize that just a few years ago you or your friends were there volunteering for college apps, wheeling patients out thinking, "Wow, I'm so lucky to be young...it must suck to be this guy." And then you realize now YOU ARE THAT GUY who has that horrible disease that he had to first Wikipedia to find out about. This really can happen to anybody.

I hate it when people think that they are getting "old" when they aren't. Old is when you are 23-years-old, sitting in a radiation oncologist office next to 80-, 90-year-old people getting the same procedure as them and wondering "What am I doing here." THAT IS OLD.

It's hard to think about the future. I have always been really oriented on goals. Like "By the time I'm 21, I'll be blah blah," "By the time I'm 30, I'll be blah blah." Now I don't anticipate next year.

I am gradually conditioning myself for death. I still don't know how I have accepted that fact so quickly.

Still, on days I am not puking my brains out for chemo (And by the way, all those chemo horror stories are real, take my word for it) I do make cancer jokes. I don't know why. The only cancer pick-up line I came up with is "Hey baby, what's your sign? Cancer? Oh me too, we have so much in common." I still have yet to try it out. I guess humor helps, because underneath, I know I am facing death and this whole thing is not funny.

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Quotes on Jack

Jim Chin, Jack's twin brother

“Jack has so much going against him. For one, his blood is literally rebelling against him. Chemotherapy and the various pills that he takes have wrecked his appetite and his ability to enjoy life fully. It hasn't dampened his willingness or ability to fight the disease, even when the treatment has made simple acts, like eating and drinking, into intensely nauseating and painful tasks. There are good days and there are bad days, but Jack works hard to make sure there are more good days than bad—not just for himself, but for us as a family.”

“As a family, we are both intensely worried and intensely hopeful. Worried, because Jack's life depends on chance; whether or not the one perfect match to save Jack's has registered, and is willing. But we're also hopeful that people, like you, have already or are going to register as donors, and be willing to donate. Every person who reads this, registers, and spreads the word, especially to people of Chinese descent, makes it that much more likely that Jack will find the match to save his life.”



David Guan, high school and UCLA classmate/friend

“Jack Chin is one of the most selfless and generous people I have ever known in my life. He spends more time worrying about others than himself. Jack is also someone you can trust to help you out in any emergency, and I've pulled through several crises over the past year thanks to his help. I remember one particular instance when I was stranded at the airport at night. I dialed a couple of my friends to ask for a ride and Jack immediately came to pick me up even though he had to cancel another appointment to do it.”



“It is important that people register because it doesn't just help Jack, but also numerous other people who are in need of a donor as well. Registering is an extremely simple process that requires little effort, and a commitment to save the life of person in need. I also used to be under the misconception that registering for bone marrow would be a painful procedure that involved drawing blood or something of the sort, but all it takes is a swab in the cheek. I truly

believe that if people realized how easy and painless it was to register, there would be a lot more registrations. I hope people will take a cue from Jack's selflessness just this once to take five minutes to possibly save a life.”

Traci Kim, high school friend/classmate

“I'm a pretty selfish person and I'm terrified of needles. I don't even donate blood. But a couple months ago, I registered to be a bone marrow donor because I knew Jack might need one. It sucks that it took one of my best friends getting cancer to push me to do it, though.”

“I don't need to talk about how it could save a life because everyone already knows that. Which makes it so weird that people like me don't do it. Objectively, there are few reasons not to register; it's just sometimes we get lazy or scared or selfish. But it's quick, easy and painless. My advice? Don't wait until your own loved one has cancer to register.”



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Connect with us to #savejacktoday



Follow Jack on Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/#!/jackchintheboss>

Tweet: Think cancer will win? #youdontknowjack



Like the “Save Jack” Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/savejacktoday>

Interested in covering Jack’s story or receiving more information?

Contact Steffi Lau at steffitrac@gmail.com for all press inquiries.

Interested in finding out a way you can help?

Contact Amy Young at amyyoung@haasalum.berkeley.edu .

Know a great place to run a registration drive but don't know how to get started?

Contact Jim Chin at jimthechin@gmail.com.

Starting a bone marrow drive is easier than you think.

- 1) Find a venue (especially one with lots of Asian Americans) where you can register 25 or more people.
- 2) Get permission from the venue.
- 3) Fill out a form. (Jim will provide)
- 4) Get 5 or more volunteers.
- 5) Run the drive! The Bone Marrow Registry will provide staff to set up, handle and help run the drive.

