



## **Team Vinay's donor drives boost South Asian registry**

by Tonya Garcia PR Week USA 23-Oct-07, 20:36

**When Indian-American medical student Vinay Chakravarthy, 28, (pictured) was diagnosed with leukemia, his loved ones rallied around him.**

When they learned that the odds of finding a South Asian donor for a life-saving bone marrow transplant were one in 20,000 because few South Asians are registered with the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), they took action. Team Vinay and PR partner Gutenberg Communications had to motivate the Indian community.

### **Strategy**

Team Vinay and Gutenberg aimed to register 20,000 South Asians with the NMDP to find a match. "The South Asian community has a lot of people in media," says Priti Radhakrishnan, a friend of Chakravarthy. "People suggested that we could do a lot of good for a lot of people if we hired a PR firm." Gutenberg decided to target the South Asian community through multiple media platforms.

### **Tactics**

Team Vinay organized donor drives, created a PSA that aired on South Asian stations, and distributed a press release to the Indo-Asian News Service. It also launched two Web sites, [www.helpvinay.org](http://www.helpvinay.org) and [www.rapouts.com](http://www.rapouts.com), the latter offering viral video. The South Asian Journalists Association lent a hand, circulating information about the campaign. India-based news channels followed the story, and US-based Indian media picked it up, giving it traction overseas. "There aren't many registries set up in India, so they were following [the] story on a regular basis," says Angela Chitkara, Gutenberg director of global media relations. "Viewers [there] would call their relatives in the States and urge them to register."

### **Results**

Vinay found a donor in about five weeks and underwent his transplant in August. In those five weeks, the effort helped register more than 23,000 South Asians nationwide on the NMDP.

### **Future**

The Team Vinay program will continue.

**PR team:** Team Vinay (Boston) and Gutenberg Communications (New York)

**Campaign:** Team Vinay

**Duration:** June 2007-ongoing

**Budget:** Pro bono; services so far valued at \$10,000 to \$15,000