THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

1 8 JUN 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL
ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: DoD National Marrow Donor Program

Public Law 101-302 of 25 May 1990 directed DoD to establish a Marrow Donor Program, to be administered by the Naval Medical Research and Development Command. Congress directed the establishment of this military program to assist the civilian National Marrow Donor Registry in a program of increased public awareness of the need for marrow donors, and to expand the opportunity for individuals within DoD to participate.

Bone marrow transplantation is the preferred treatment for more than 50 fatal blood disorders, and it is estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 Americans are in need of a transplant each year. The primary purpose of the National Marrow Donor Registry is to provide, on a voluntary basis, unrelated donors for patients needing bone marrow transplants. Currently, the number of marrow transplants that can be performed is limited by the availability of tissue matched (typed) donors. A national registry offers the possibility of genetically matched bone marrow transplant therapy to 70 percent of the patients who do not have a matched family member as a potential donor.

Through the DoD Bone Marrow Donor Program, military. personnel, their dependents, and DoD civilian personnel will be offered the opportunity to apply voluntarily for acceptance as potential bone marrow donors. The initial process includes drawing a blood sample and typing it. If accepted, the individual will be included in the national registry. If selected as a potential donor, he or she will be given a briefing, a medical examination including history, and further typing will be conducted using a fresh blood sample. At each step of the process, the individual is given the opportunity to decline donor status.

Attached is the initial policy statement that establishes and provides direction in the operation of the DoD Marrow Donor Program. The necessary instructions governing the DoD Marrow Donor Program will be published as soon as possible. The implementation of the DoD Marrow Program is to be coordinated through the C. W. Bill Young Marrow Donor Recruitment and Research Program, Naval Medical Research Institute which is located in Bethesda, Maryland. Your active assistance is requested in the development of a program which will provide "the gift of life" to those in need.

Thank you for your cooperation regarding this most important matter.

Enrique Mendez, Jr., M.D.

Attachment:
As stated