BACKGROUND
The National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP)/Be The Match® supports patients undergoing blood and marrow transplant (BMT) and their caregivers by providing support programs and educational resources. BMT is a complex treatment used for malignant and non-malignant blood disorders, such as leukemia and sickle cell disease. To make informed decisions about BMT, patients and their caregivers require effective communication of risk, survival and outcomes information. Plain language and numeracy experts offer best practices for communicating complex numbers and statistics to non-expert audiences. The effectiveness of these practices has not been evaluated in BMT. Past studies involved healthy participants, which limited the generalizability.

OBJECTIVES
1) To identify best practices communicating treatment risk, survival and outcomes.
2) To design a study to determine whether plain language and numeracy best practices enhance patients’ understanding.

METHODS
- Conducted search of PubMed for articles published 2007-2016 with these terms: Evidence-based numeracy and health literacy Risk, survival and outcomes communication Strategies for communicating risk and survival information
- Reviewed existing patient education resources to identify essential information for informed treatment decision making.
- Applied best practices to the current transplant center survival outcomes (Figure 1A).

RESULTS
Themes from 3 of 8 key articles include:
- Careful consideration of visual display, data presented and textual framing is essential.
- Limit information to only the necessary details required for decision making.
- A degree of miscommunication is expected so testing prior to implementation is crucial.

Federal guidelines support these findings.

The best-practices display incorporates these themes and guidelines (Figure 1B).

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS
To help facilitate informed decisions about health care, patient educators and advocates can use plain language and numeracy best practices to improve understanding of risk, survival and outcomes information.

A research protocol is in development to test strategies for communicating risk and survival statistics with BMT patients and caregivers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
- Patients and caregivers: BeTheMatch.org/patient
- Clinicians: BeTheMatchClinical.org

REFERENCES