World Blood Donor Day and the EDQM

Essential points
World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) is celebrated each year on 14 June. WBDD helps to raise public awareness of the need for blood donation and promotes the principle of voluntary, non-remunerated donation.

WBDD’s objectives are:

- to thank blood donors for their life-saving donations;
- to promote voluntary unpaid blood donation; and
- to promote self-sufficiency in safe blood and blood products based on voluntary unpaid blood donation.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the global event, which will be hosted in Paris, France. The focus of this year’s campaign is ‘blood donation is a gift that saves lives’. The slogan is: “Give the gift of life: donate blood”.

There is a long tradition of voluntary unpaid blood donation in many European countries. Nearly all countries have legal provisions or guidelines that cover the process. The principle of voluntary blood unpaid donation does not exclude compensation for donors, if this is limited to making good the expenses and inconvenience related to the donation. Generally, the amount of this financial compensation and the nature of expenses covered are set by legislation in individual countries.

A poll taken in 2009 showed that 37% of Europeans had given blood before. The Eurobarometer survey indicated a 6% increase since the last survey was conducted in 2002. The countries shown to have the highest levels of blood donation were Austria (66%), France (52%), Greece (51%) and the Republic of Cyprus (51%). In contrast, the lowest levels of blood donation were noted in Portugal (22%), Italy (23%), Poland (25%), Malta (29%) and Sweden (30%).

Summary
The events of World Blood Donor Day are supported by the collaborative efforts of four international organisations working globally for the provision of safe blood: the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations (IFBDO/FIODS) and the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT). Between them, these organizations represent 192 WHO Member States, 181 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 50 national voluntary blood donor organizations and thousands of blood transfusion specialists throughout the world. Through the participation of their members and other organisations, such as yours, World Blood Donor Day is set to be a truly global event.

As France was selected as the host country for 2013, the WHO has invited the Council of Europe (CoE), the oldest and largest of all European institutions – which now numbers 47 member states – to join the four pillar organisations in making this year’s celebration in Europe truly unique.

For many years, the CoE has supported World Blood Donor Day in order to give this cause worldwide media exposure and to help achieve progress on attitudes to blood donation. Since the CoE was established 1949, the key to its success has been its collaborative work process.

One of the founding principles of the CoE is increasing co-operation between member states to improve the quality of life for all Europeans. The CoE co-ordinates inter-governmental co-operation, involving experts from European states and contributions by other international organisations such as the WHO and the European Union.

In the field of health, the CoE has consistently selected ethical problems for study in all member states. The most important ethical issues relate to the non-commercialisation of human substances, i.e. blood and its components, organs, tissues and cells.

Work on blood transfusion in the Council of Europe began in the 1950s. Since the beginning, the guiding principles that inspired the relevant activities have been:

- achieving self-sufficiency;
- protecting the health of blood donors and recipients; and
- the non-commercialisation of substances of human origin by voluntary and non-remunerated donation.

The CoE’s European Committee on Blood Transfusion – comprising 35 European countries and 9 observer countries, together with the WHO and the European Commission – concentrates on producing stringent standards of ethics, quality and safety in this field. The outcomes of this work are disseminated to the member states in order to stimulate evolution of national legislation.

A major achievement of the Council of Europe in this respect is the regularly updated publication of the “Guide to the preparation, use and quality assurance of blood components”; currently in its 17th Edition (2013). The guide contains recommendations aimed at blood banks and transfusion agencies on collection of blood, blood components, technical procedures, transfusion practices and quality assurance systems, describing a set of measures to guarantee the safety, quality and efficacy of blood components. It constitutes a fundamental benchmark in defining a “gold standard” for transfusion services.

Questions and answers

What are common behaviours and attitudes towards blood donation and transfusion?

Population studies show that men have given blood more often than women (44% of men compared to 31% of women). The group most likely to have given blood (46%) is the 40-54 year-old age group.

People in middle management have donated most often (49%), followed by persons who completed their education at 20 years of age or over (46%), and the self-employed (44%). Conversely, students and persons aged 15-24 are the lowest category in terms of blood donations (19% and 21%, respectively), with persons engaged in home duties donating only slightly more (25%).

An analysis of blood donation at country level reveals some significant differences, but no particular geographical skew. The variation in results is significant, ranging from 22% in Portugal to over 66% in Austria. The most significant increases in blood donation levels between the 2002 and 2009 Eurobarometer surveys are recorded in Austria (up from 51% to 66%), France (up from 38% to 52%), Greece (up from 40% to 51%), Spain (up from 25% to 41%), and Germany (up from 31% to 41%).
The majority of Europeans (57%) think that the safety of transfusions has improved and 23% believe it is just as safe as it was 10 years ago. The 2002 and 2004 European directives contributed to this perception by harmonising certain technical requirements relating to blood and blood components.

**What average proportion of the population does it take to meet a country’s needs?**

It is enough for 1-3% of the population to give blood in order to supply a country’s needs. But unfortunately, the proportion is less than 1% in 73 countries worldwide. Some 60% of the world’s blood supply goes to 18% of the population, leaving 82% of the global population inadequately covered.

**Who can be a blood donor?**

Each country has its own selection criteria for blood donors. As a rule, a potential donor must:

- be in good health;
- weigh over 45-50 kilos;
- be 16-70 years of age (18-65 in some countries);
- comply with all the rules aimed at protecting both donors and persons who may be transfused with the blood.

**The WBDD 2013 official global event**

This year’s global event will be hosted by France and its national blood service Etablissement Français du Sang (EFS) on 14 June at UNESCO House, Paris.

- The Opening Ceremony will begin with an address by Getachew Engida, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO, followed by Francois Toujas, President of EFS.
- Other speakers include:
  - Alain Gazo, President of the French Federation for Voluntary Blood Donation (FFDSB)
  - Gianfranco Massaro, President of the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations (IFBDO/FIODS)
  - Judith Chapman, Executive Director of the International Society of Blood Transfusion
  - Dr Che Kit Lin, Asa Pacific Zonal Coordinator, Global Advisory Panel on Corporate Governance and Risk Management of Blood Services in Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (GAP/IFRC)
  - Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe
  - Dr Teis Boerma, Director Health Systems Policies and Workforce, a.i, WHO (World Health Organization)
  - Marisol Touraine, French Minister of Social Affairs and Health
- The morning session will close with an official torch relay.
- The afternoon session will begin with an International Symposium on “Ethics and Self-Sufficiency” followed by an International Roundtable on “Ethics and Self-Sufficiency in the World”. There will be representatives from the blood safety community representing a number of different continents:
  - Europe: Dr Neelam Dhingra, Coordinator, Blood Transfusion Safety, WHO, Geneva
- South America: Dr Cristina Martinez Valenzuela, Director of the Concepción Blood Centre, Chile
- Africa: Dr André Loua, Regional Advisor for Blood Safety, WHO Africa Regional Office
- Asia: Dr Lin Che-Kit, Coordinator, Asia Pacific region GAP/IFRC, Chief Executive and Medical Director, Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service

- Johanne Charbonneau, professor at the INRS-Centre Urbanisation Culture Société, Canada, and holder of the Research Chair on the Social Aspects of Blood Donation, will lead another Roundtable on “Sociology and Ethics”.
- The event will be closed by Francois Toujas, President of EFS.

WHO: global campaign and promotional materials

As the founding institution of WBDD, the WHO is the developer of visuals and materials for the international campaign. For the 10th Anniversary celebration it has decided to focus on this aspect and created a ‘10 Years’ logo to accompany its general WBDD banner. The campaign itself will revolve around the idea of ‘blood donation is a gift that saves lives’, with the slogan: “Give the gift of life: donate blood”.

The WHO produces materials in all of the official UN languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, and the promotional materials for the 2013 campaign include: gift tags, t-shirts, pens, caps, mugs and bumper stickers.

CoE offers member states support with promotional materials

This year a media campaign in kit form has been made available to member states (MS) for promoting donation among the public on the occasion of World Blood Donor Day. The campaign kit provided to MS will contain the global campaign visual and will comprise a brochure, a poster, stickers, postcards and gift tags. All of these materials will be available for adaptation into all European languages, under the responsibility of MS.

The CoE and its European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM) have offered tactical support to all MS in delivering materials for the WBDD 2013 campaign, and there has been a large number of requests for promotional materials in national languages such as English, French, German, Greek and Finnish. Delivery of items such as posters, postcards and blood donation brochures began in April and will continue until all requests have been fulfilled.

CoE’s efforts on the web and in social media

The EDQM and CoE websites will include a focus on WBDD displayed on both website homepages. This will increase the visibility of the campaign further and also drive traffic to a WBDD-specific webpage, which includes an interactive map of Europe to locate your national blood establishment.

The EDQM and CoE will also employ a WBDD-specific banner on external communications; the banner will display the 2013 slogan and will be used by the Public Relations and Finance divisions as an email signature, spreading the message of WBDD. The EDQM/CoE intranet will carry an announcement for all employees, in order to raise awareness of the campaign and encourage staff to donate blood and also be a part of events held in Strasbourg as volunteers.
The EDQM, will create a specific page for WBDD 2013 on the Thunderclap social media platform. This will allow the general public the opportunity to show their support for WBDD through Facebook and Twitter, and will be the first time social media will be used in a bid to generate maximum publicity for the 10th anniversary celebration. Please see the link below for more information and join us in making this year’s event truly unforgettable. Click here to show your support.

Displays on CoE premises in Strasbourg

The CoE main building, the “Palais de l'Europe” will be displaying a large banner in its garden in June, and the EDQM will display a banner on its front gate. This will highlight the campaign to employees of the organisation, visitors to the buildings and the general public who walk and drive past these two buildings every day.

The status of blood donations in France

France and the Etablissement Français du Sang (EFS) have been promoting unpaid blood donation since the 1950s, and the country’s high rate of donations have resulted in its being selected to host the WBDD 2013 official global event.

In France, blood services are mainly provided by the EFS. In 2011, the EFS collected 3,190,260 donations and registered 365,593 new donors. The collection of blood is organised through more than 40,000 mobile blood collection vans, 153 fixed-site blood collections and 17 regional blood transfusion centres.

France has the second highest rate of donation in Europe, and one of the highest in the world, with 52% of French citizens giving blood. Men make the greatest percentage of donations: 53% whole blood, 59% plasma and 59% platelets donations. The 20-29 age group represents 26% of the total number of donations, whereas blood donors of between 40-59 years of age represent 41%.

There is a stronger mobilisation in the countryside, since 23% of donors live in a municipality with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. By contrast, the Paris conurbation, accounting for 20% of the national population, represents just under 11% of blood donors.

Regional variations are quite pronounced. Despite an approximate national average rate of 1.56 donations per year, the figure may approach 2 donations per year in some regions and, for example, be limited to 1.3 in the Île-de-France region.

Please see the attached table of nominated contacts for specific information in your region.

The role of the EDQM/CoE in protecting public health

The EDQM helps to uphold everybody’s essential right to have access to good quality medicines and health care. It promotes and protects public health, notably by:

- laying down quality standards for the manufacture and control of medicines in Europe (through the European Pharmacopoeia comprising more than 2,200 legally binding standards) and beyond its boundaries;

2 EFS - Rapport d'activité 2010
- co-ordinating a network of more than 66 official medicines control laboratories (OMCLs) in 34 European and 3 non-European countries;
- co-operating with national and international organisations to combat trade in illegal and counterfeit medical and medicinal products.
- developing guidance and standards in the areas of blood transfusion, organ transplantation and consumer health issues.

To achieve its goals in the area of blood transfusion, the Council of Europe has focused its work on the study of ethical, legal and organisational aspects, so as to ensure quality, increase the supply of blood, avert wastage of substances of human origin, and determine the possible impact of new scientific developments from an ethical and organisational standpoint.

Other Council of Europe reference texts on blood transfusion

- Resolution on sexual behaviours of blood donors that have an impact on transfusion safety, adopted on 27 March 2013
- Resolution CM/Res (2008)5 on donor responsibility and on limitation to donation of blood and blood components, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 March 2008;
- Terms of reference adopted on 6 February 2007 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe;
- Activities of Blood Banks in the Council of Europe member states related to Bone Marrow Transplantations, March 2008;

Further information:
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