

Where do we Stand Towards 100% Voluntary Blood Donation – are we Really Moving Towards Achieving the Goal?

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ABSTRACT: *Voluntary blood donation is an act of selflessness, blood donors demonstrate altruistic behavior and a good attitude towards the well-being of society. The dream and the ultimate aim of the developing countries is to achieve total 100% voluntary blood donations to provide safe blood for a needy population. There are many factors that determine the efficient and effective functioning of a blood bank to meet recipient needs. In many developing countries the majority of blood donors are students and the younger generation. It is difficult to reach our targets involving the students and younger generation alone, but can reach our goal if we successfully target the general public at large. Using of effective and dedicated educational programs and communication strategies in driving awareness among the general public, it will indeed be possible for blood donor organizations/ blood banks to reach a goal of 100% voluntary blood donation in near future.*

Key words: *Altruistic behavior, donor educational programs, social networks and media*

Voluntary blood donation is an act of selflessness, out of the principle or practice of concern for the welfare of others. Blood donors demonstrate altruistic behavior and a good attitude towards the well-being of society. Donors who give blood voluntarily and for altruistic reasons have a lower prevalence of HIV, hepatitis viruses and other blood-borne infections than people who donate for family members or for payment. The dream and the ultimate aim of the developing countries is to achieve total 100% voluntary blood donations to provide safe blood for a needy population. Developing countries are working hard to face issues linked to lack of blood donation.

The Challenges

The challenges in achieving 100% voluntary blood donation depends upon many factors such as: government commitment and support for the cause, donor education programs and communication strategies, trained staff in blood donor motivation, donor care and recognition. There are many factors that determine the efficient and effective functioning of a blood bank to meet recipient needs. Donor care and recognition are an important measure to increase the flow of voluntary blood donors to blood banks to keep their shelves full of stock throughout the year. Factors such as the process of donating blood, the competency of staff in venipuncture, how long it takes to donate blood, the tidiness and cleanliness of facilities, post-donation care, positive recognition and words of appreciation are all major influencers of blood donors to develop blood donation habits and increase blood donor return behavior (Siromani et al., 2013). There should be uniform blood donation and blood collection criteria across any given country. The atmosphere of a blood collection facility, with competent and skilled staff, improves psychological aspects for the first-time blood donors and therefore reduces anxiety, stress and syncopal reactions.

Global Statistics

According to WHO Global Blood Safety, around 103 million blood donations are made annually by all types of blood donors; – fifty

percent of all blood donations are collected in developed countries, home to 18% of the world's population. The average donation rate in developed countries is 36.8 donations per 1000 population. This compares with 11.7 per 1000 population in transitional countries and 3.9 donations in developing countries. If 1% of a country's population donates blood, it will be sufficient to meet that country's basic requirements for blood for transfusion. But donation rates are still less than 1% of the population in 75 countries and all of them are developing and transitional countries (WHO, 2014).

The shortage of safe blood is therefore aggravated by the shortage of blood donors in developing countries, where blood is needed most for clinical reasons. The proportion of safe donors is highest in systems where all donors are voluntary and non-remunerated (Gibs, & Corcoran, 1994). Many developing countries still rely on blood from family members, or paid donors and in these countries, the seroprevalence in blood donors for transfusion-transmissible infections (TTI's) such as HIV, hepatitis B and C, and syphilis, is much higher than in countries with voluntary, unpaid donation.

Where do we stand

In many developing countries the majority of blood donors are students and the younger generation. They are involving them more and blood donation awareness programs are particularly targeting them. And eventually many of the blood donation drives are conducted in the educational institutions and few from the community. Is that alone will help us to reach our goal? It is difficult to reach the targets involving the students and younger generation alone.

Involving general public

But can reach our goal if we successfully target the general public at large. There should be a simple and effective communication strategy; and local languages should be used more to understand the cause better. Pledge clubs and cause ambassadors should be encouraged among public.

Social networks and media are effective and reliable tools to propagate, the need and importance of donating blood. Tailor-made communications methods are much more effective, because they

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can be gently varied, according to the needs of communities and localities. Blood banks should also involve the general public in this drive towards voluntary blood donation and make them understand the joy of donating their valuable blood for the well being of the society.

Motivation through social networks and media

Blood banks should promote donor education programs and the IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials should be available throughout communities. Blood banks should adopt newer technologies to motivate bulk donors through social networks and media. Involving users of Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn/GooglePlus/Instagram and WhatsApp in the propagation of voluntary blood donation. The effort and time spent in educating the community about voluntary blood donation is more at first, but as time goes on results move from the positive to the impressive. Community- oriented blood donation camps contain the seeds of future success (Siromani et al., 2015).

If we make use of effective and dedicated educational programs and communication strategies in driving awareness about voluntary

blood donation among the general public, it will indeed be possible for the developing countries blood donor organizations/ blood banks to reach a goal of 100% voluntary blood donation in near future.

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