World Blood Donor Day 2013

Give the gift of life: donate blood
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Public health context

Transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. It can help patients suffering from life-threatening conditions live longer and with a higher quality of life, and can support complex medical and surgical procedures. It also has an essential, life-saving role in maternal and perinatal care.

However, in many countries, there is an inadequate supply of safe blood, and blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available while also ensuring its quality and safety. There is a marked difference in the level of access to safe blood between high- and low-income countries.

An adequate supply of safe blood can only be assured through regular donations by voluntary unpaid blood donors. These donors are the safest group of donors as the prevalence of bloodborne infections is lowest among this group. WHO’s goal is for all countries to obtain all their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donors by 2020.

WHO recommends that every country should put in place policies, systems and structures to ensure the safety, quality, accessibility and timely availability of blood and blood products to meet the needs of all patients who require transfusion. Policies should be supported by appropriate legislation to promote uniform implementation of standards and consistency in the quality and safety of blood and blood products. All activities related to blood collection, testing, processing, storage and distribution should be coordinated at the national level through effective organization and management.

Origins of the campaign

The first World Blood Donor Day was observed in 2004. Its designation as an annual global event by the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly followed in 2005. World Blood Donor Day is now celebrated every year throughout the world on 14 June to raise awareness of the importance of blood donation and to recognize the contribution of voluntary unpaid blood donors in saving lives and improving health.

World Blood Donor Day has a further purpose: to create wider awareness about the need for availability and appropriate use of safe blood and blood products, and the need for many more people to make a commitment to regular voluntary unpaid blood donation.

The date of 14 June is the birthday of Karl Landsteiner (1868–1943), an Austrian biologist and physician, considered to be the “founder” of modern blood transfusion. Landsteiner discovered the ABO blood groups in 1901, developed the modern system of classification of blood groups, and identified, in 1937, together with Alexander S. Wiener, the Rhesus factor, thus enabling physicians to transfuse blood without endangering a patient’s life.

1 See http://www.who.int/bloodsafety/WHA58_13-en.pdf
World Blood Donor Day provides a springboard for blood safety programmes and campaigns throughout the year, as well as wider activities to strengthen blood transfusion services. It is designed to complement rather than replace the national blood donor days or weeks that are organized in a number of countries. Some are held at the same time as World Blood Donor Day while others take place at different times of the year.

Objectives

The objectives of this year’s campaign are to:

- thank blood donors for their life-saving donations
- promote voluntary unpaid blood donation
- urge governments to strengthen blood systems and to take concrete steps towards self-sufficiency in safe blood and blood products based on 100% voluntary unpaid blood donation.

Target audiences

The primary target audiences for World Blood Donor Day are donors who regularly give blood and healthy people who are eligible to give blood but are not yet occasional or regular donors.

Health officials at national level who are responsible for setting national policy and systems for blood donation and transfusion are another important target audience.

International partners (see box at right), national blood transfusion services, Red Cross societies, donor associations and professional societies each have an important role to play, both in supporting countries towards self-sufficiency in this area and in disseminating campaign messages.

Theme

The focus for this year’s campaign – the 10th anniversary of World Blood Donor Day – is blood donation as a gift that saves lives. WHO encourages all countries to highlight stories from people whose lives have been saved through blood transfusion, as a way of motivating regular blood donors to continue giving blood and inspiring people in good health who have never donated blood, particularly young people, to begin doing so.

Slogan

The slogan for the 2013 campaign is “Give the gift of life: donate blood”.

Partners

WHO has worked with a number of partners to promote voluntary blood donation through the celebration of World Blood Donor Day since the first one in 2004. These include: the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Society of Blood Transfusion.

The Council of Europe, through its European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare, is actively involved in preparations for this year’s campaign.

The European Commission is also a supporter of the campaign this year.
Key messages

A single unit of donated blood can save up to three lives.

Many patients requiring transfusion, particularly in developing countries, do not have timely access to safe blood.

Blood collection from voluntary unpaid blood donors is the cornerstone of a safe and sufficient blood supply. Regular voluntary blood donors are the safest source of blood, as there are fewer bloodborne infections among these donors than among people who donate for family members in emergencies or who give blood for payment.

In low- and middle-income countries, the greatest use of donated blood is for pregnancy-related complications and severe childhood anaemia.

In high-income countries, transfusion is most commonly used for supportive care in heart surgery, transplant surgery, massive trauma and cancer therapy.

Providing safe and adequate blood through well-organized, national blood systems should be an integral part of every country’s national health-care policy.

WHO’s goal is for all countries to obtain all their blood supplies from 100% voluntary unpaid donors by 2020.

WHO provides policy guidance and technical assistance to support countries to ensure that safe blood and blood products are available and used appropriately for all people who need them.

Campaign materials

Our campaign web site is www.who.int/world-blood-donor-day

Files for posters and web banners in a number of languages, and design files for promotional T-shirts, caps, mugs, pens, car stickers and gift tags in English and French can be downloaded from the site.
Global event

The host country for World Blood Donor Day 2013 is France. Through its national blood service – the Etablissement Français du Sang (EFS) – France has been promoting voluntary unpaid blood donation since the 1950s.

The global event will be held in Paris on 14 June. An opening ceremony will be held in the morning, with high-level representation from the French Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Etablissement Français du Sang, WHO and partners working in the areas of blood donation and transfusion.

An international symposium, composed of roundtable events, will be held in the afternoon, focusing on ethics, self-sufficiency and sociology.

Get involved

There are many ways to get involved in World Blood Donor Day. Here are some ideas.

Everyone

• Participate in local events being organized to celebrate World Blood Donor Day.
• Give blood at your nearest blood collection centre.

Ministries of health

• Organize and participate in activities to celebrate World Blood Donor Day and promote voluntary unpaid blood donation to the public, across government and to other sectors.
• Speak to the media about the importance of blood donation and the successes and challenges of your country in meeting national needs for blood through voluntary unpaid donations.
• Distribute posters and leaflets about blood donation to health centres.

International organizations

• Provide updated information on blood transfusion and blood safety to your members.
• Organize or participate in international, national and local events.
• Urge media outlets to run special features and editorials on blood donation.

National blood transfusion services

• Organize blood collection drives.
• Invite prominent politicians, celebrities and sporting heroes to participate in World Blood Donor Day celebrations.
• Disseminate information about the importance of giving blood.
• Print out and distribute posters from the WHO World Blood Donor Day campaign web site.
• Produce, display and disseminate promotional materials such as T-shirts, caps and car stickers.
• Hold a donor recognition awards ceremony to honour individuals and partner organizations who have made significant contributions to blood donation activities in your country.
• Hold open days at blood centres and invite the general public to learn about blood donation and blood transfusion.

Journalists
• Broadcast messages and write articles about blood donation and the need for access to safe blood and blood products.
• Write articles about how close your country is to meeting national needs for blood through voluntary unpaid donations.
• Interview staff from the ministry of health and blood transfusion services.
• Write feature stories about people whose lives have been saved as a result of blood donation, or about people who are first-time donors, or have donated blood a record number of times.
• Attend events organized to celebrate World Blood Donor Day and write about them.

Tell us about your events

Through our web site
We appreciate hearing about events and activities that you are organizing. Let us, and others, know about your plans by registering your event through the following link: http://www.who.int/campaigns/world-blood-donor-day/2013/event_registration/en/index.html

Through our social media channels
Closer to World Blood Donor Day, we will be linking to campaign materials through our Facebook page, YouTube channel and Google+. Through these channels, you can let us know how you will be involved too.

Facebook
YouTube
Google+

You can also follow us on Twitter@WHO. Join the conversation using the hashtag #GiveBlood. Follow our World Blood Donor Day tweets and retweet those of interest to your own networks.

2 Entries will be checked for completeness before posting on the campaign site.
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