



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL BLOOD PROGRAMME SALUTES DEDICATED BLOOD DONORS ON WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY 2011

- Increase in the number of individuals and organisations honoured for their support of the National Blood Donor programme
- Call to continue meeting the growing need for blood

Singapore, 11 June 2011 – In celebration of World Blood Donor Day, over 1,600 awards will be presented to exceptionally committed individuals and corporate/community groups for their support of the National Blood Programme. Besides the recognition ceremony on 11 June 2011, the celebrations will also include fun-filled activities for donors at the Singapore Science Centre.

World Blood Donor Day is a global event aimed at raising awareness of the need for regular donors to meet the increasing demand for blood and to honour those committed to donating altruistically and regularly. The global theme for World Blood Donor Day 2011 is, “More blood. More life.” This theme reinforces the urgent need for more people all over the world to become life-savers by volunteering to donate blood regularly. Please see Annex A for more details.

The event also saw an 11% increase in the number of awardees with 169 more awardees. There are 41 Champion of Champions¹ donors this year, twice as many compared to last year. The number of Medal for Life² winners has almost tripled, with eight receiving the highest accolade accorded to committed and regular donors who donate blood more than 200 times.

Guest-of-Honour Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister of Health, said, “I’d encourage new donors to come forward and join the many who are donating blood. To all those individuals, corporate partners and blood mobile teams who are already making a difference, thank you and please continue with this worthy cause and share this precious gift of life.”

¹ Champion of Champions – Males donating more than 150 units of blood ; females donating more than 125 units of blood

² Medal for Life – Males donating more than 200 units of blood; females donating more than 150 units of blood

Latest blood donation trends show that there are more blood donors, more who are donating regularly as well as more who are donating at a younger age. In 2010, the Blood Donor Recruitment Programme achieved more than 110,000 blood donations, an increase of nearly 4,000 more blood donations compared to the previous year.

Mr Tee Tua Ba, Chairman of the Singapore Red Cross, said, "I am very heartened that more people are committed to donating blood regularly and at an earlier age. I would like to salute our regular blood donors for their goodwill and outstanding commitment. Every effort counts and every unit donated makes a difference."

From Recipient to Advocate

At the event, 19 year old blood recipient Mr Firdaus Bin Mohd Abdullah, a leukaemia survivor diagnosed with the blood disorder at the tender age of 11, said, "Words can't fully express my gratefulness to those who've selflessly and anonymously donated their blood so that I am given a chance at life. There are so many donors and types of blood donations that have sustained me'. Today, free from leukaemia, Firdaus has made it his mission and passion to help others by actively volunteering at blood drives and events held by the Singapore Red Cross.

Growing Need for Blood

More than 100,000 units of blood are needed annually, just to meet the transfusion needs of patients in Singapore. Additionally, with an ageing population and more sophisticated medical procedures, the demand of blood is increasing. Blood is a life-line for those having medical emergencies and major surgeries, organ transplants, as well as sufferers of cancers and blood disorders like leukaemia, lymphomas.

SINGAPORE RED CROSS & HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
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About World Blood Donor Day

World Blood Donor Day is dedicated to individuals who voluntarily and regularly donate their blood without any reward, except the knowledge that they have helped to save lives and help those in need. It also aims to create wider awareness of the importance of voluntary blood donation and encourage more people to become regular blood donors. The theme for 2011 is “*More Blood. More Life*”, reinforcing the urgent need for more people all over the world to become life-savers by volunteering to donate blood regularly.

Worldwide, at least 90 million units of blood are donated each year to save lives and improve health. 62 countries have achieved voluntary blood donation, up from 39 in 2002. In Singapore, blood donation is voluntary and non-remunerated; there is a need to reiterate the importance of voluntary blood donation and to encourage more people, especially young people to make blood donation an integral part of their lives.

World Blood Donor Day is sponsored by four international organisations: The World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Federation of Blood Donor Organisations and the International Society of Blood Transfusion.

For more information please visit <http://www.who.int/worldblooddonorday>

About Singapore Red Cross Blood Donor Recruitment Programme

Singapore Red Cross (SRC) was appointed as the National Blood Donor Recruiter in April 2001. Together with our partner-in-service, the Blood Services Group of the Health Sciences Authority, we aim to collect sufficient safe blood for the transfusion needs of all our hospitals.

The SRC focuses on 3 main functions in the National Blood Programme:

- Recruitment, Retention and Recognition of blood donors
- Promotion and Education to increase public awareness on the importance of blood donation
- Organisation of mobile blood donation drives in the community

About HSA's Blood Services Group

The Blood Services Group (BSG) of HSA, as the national blood service, secures the nation's blood supply by ensuring a safe and adequate blood supply. It operates the Bloodbank@HSA and Bloodbank@Woodlands. It is responsible for collecting, processing, testing and distributing blood and blood products to all hospitals in Singapore. It also provides specialist transfusion medicine services in immunohaematology and tissue typing and is actively engaged in the cutting edge therapeutic research area of cell processing.

FACT SHEET

Overview of the current blood supply situation

Blood is needed not only to save lives in times of emergencies; it is also needed to sustain the lives of patients who require regular blood transfusions in the hospitals.

These are the leukaemia patients, the haemophiliacs, the thalassaemia patients, patients with bleeding disorders, and also patients undergoing major surgery.

Every day, 350 units of blood are required by all the hospitals in Singapore for patients requiring blood transfusions. It is crucial for more healthy individuals to come forward to help save and sustain the lives of the vulnerable. Blood donors can give 3 to 4 donations a year regularly. Every day, Singapore needs at least 300 to 400 blood donors to come forward to donate blood at Bloodbank@HSA or at bloodmobiles, so as to meet the requirements of the hospitals and to have enough to maintain a healthy stock level for emergencies.

SRC seeks to inform and educate the public on the importance of a constant supply of blood to help ease or prevent acute shortages during festive periods, school breaks and also in times of emergencies by increasing the current bloodstock from 3 days to a healthy level of 6 days.

Within 6 hours of a blood donation...

Every unit of donated blood will be processed into different blood products to treat a variety of medical conditions.

Red Cells	To treat patients with anaemia and patients undergoing major surgeries
Platelets	To stop bleeding in patients who suffer from cancer, leukaemia or bleeding disorders
Plasma	The liquid portion of blood, to treat patients with low clotting factors
Cryoprecipitate	A clotting protein, to treat patients with bleeding disorders

Different types of blood donation

Whole Blood Donation

Whole blood donation is the collection of a packet of blood directly from the veins of the blood donor. Every blood pack of standard volume collected will be processed into red blood cells, platelets and fresh frozen plasma. Each of these can be used individually for separate patients. Optimising blood usage and benefit through blood component processing technology, each pack of donated blood can potentially be used to help 3 patients.

Platelet Donation

Platelets transfusions are frequently given to patients who are unable to make enough platelets in their bone marrow and dengue patients with a drastic drop in platelet count, to prevent serious bleeding. *Plateletpheresis* is a special blood donation process that allows you to give one blood component- platelets, which are the tiny cells that help to stop bleeding. There is plentiful supply of platelets in the blood and very large numbers can be donated with no ill effects. This process takes about 60-90 minutes to complete and you can donate platelets once every 4 weeks. With just five days' storage life, platelet donations are delivered quickly to the patients who need them. O+, A+ and B+ donors are required.

Plasma Donation

Plasma is used to correct bleeding disorders. It can also be further processed to make many other useful blood products for patients, such as immunoglobulin and factor VII concentrate. *Plasmapheresis* is a special blood donation procedure that allows you to give only plasma while the rest of the blood components, including red blood cells, are returned to you. This process takes about 45 minutes and you can donate plasma once every 4 weeks. AB+ blood group (universal plasma type) donors are required.

Double Red Cell Collection

The red cells are used in the treatment of anaemia (low haemoglobin count). They are also essential to replace blood loss from accident, surgery and childbirth. Hospitals use large volumes of red blood cells everyday and hence, the need for red blood cells is constant. The donation of 2 units of red cells takes approximately 35-45 minutes to complete. This is a useful way to collect donors of rare blood types such as Rhesus negative.

Demand for Different Types of Blood Donation

- Platelet donation is more needed than plasma donations. Patients with low platelet count require repeated transfusions quite frequently as the life span of platelet is limited to 5 days. Also, group AB plasma can be transfused to all blood group patients but platelets are given according to their blood groups.
 - Usually, donation of the component also depends on the donor's suitability and the availability of the component. Platelet requirements are always urgent due to their ability to prevent life threatening bleeding and their limited 5-day shelf-life.
 - Plasma requirements are usually low except for the blood group AB that can be given to any patient in an emergency.

For more information, please visit <http://donorweb.org/>

Other Interesting facts about blood donation

- 43% of our donor population belongs to O+ blood type, 26% A+, 25% B+ and 6% AB+.
- A third of blood donors are female.
- One hour of your time is all you need to save 3 lives.
- At each blood donation, about 10-12% of your circulating blood volume is taken, depending on your body weight.
- One unit of blood is divided into three blood product parts to treat different illnesses: red blood cells, platelets, and plasma.
- Blood donated can be used to treat various medical conditions such as thalassaemia, those suffering from leukaemia, cancer, bleeding disorders, as well as patients undergoing major surgeries and victims of accidents and trauma.
- More than 99,000 whole blood donations and over 10,000 blood donations of other types (platelet donations, plasma donations) were collected in 2010.
- Blood donation is now more convenient. On average, there are 12 blood drives every week island wide. This is in addition to donating blood at Bloodbank@HSA and Bloodbank@Woodlands.
- 1.8% of Singapore's population donates blood regularly, 35% of donors are youths below 25.