

**HEADQUARTERS**

31 Ifigenias, 2007 Nicosia, Cyprus • P.O.Box 28807, 2083 Nicosia, Cyprus  
Tel.: +357 22 319 129, Fax: +357 22 314 552, E-mail: thalassaemia@cytanet.com.cy



# **The Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF)**

## **honours the World Blood Donor Day**

**14<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Transfusion of blood and blood products helps and save millions of lives. This statement is even more true for individuals whose day to day survival depends on regular blood transfusions. Patients with hereditary blood disorders like thalassaemia, Sickle Cell Disease (SCD), Blackfan Diamond anaemia, other congenital anaemias as well as conditions like the haemophilias and congenital immunodeficiencies, depend on human blood and blood products for both their survival and wellbeing.

The higher the prevalence of transfusion dependent thalassaemia,  $\beta$ - thalassaemia mainly, in a country, the higher the percentage of the donated blood supply needed to address the medical needs of these patients, who often require lifelong 2-3 units of red blood cells every month.

**In the absence of national or international registries for haemoglobin disorders, and based on published and reported figures, which TIF believes are grossly underestimated, some 500,000 patients living across the world with transfusion dependent thalassaemia alone, consume, or should consume if they receive appropriate transfusion care, about 12 – 18 million units of Red Blood Cells (RBCs) to keep them alive. In addition, an even greater number of patients, anticipated to be some millions across mainly of the developing world, are born and live with ‘milder’ or intermediate phenotypes of thalassaemia ( $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ ) and/or abnormal haemoglobins including HbE and importantly Sickle Cell Disease (SCD). A proportion of these, which cannot be predetermined, become transfusion dependent at some point in their lives, and RBCs transfusion therapy become integrated into their standard medical care protocol.**



One may thus, easily recognise the blood transfusion needs of patients with haemoglobin disorders and consequently the unequivocally great role of the blood donors and immense VALUE of their contribution to the health and quality of lives of these patients.

Voluntary, regular, non-remunerated blood donation practices have been gradually replacing, across the world, family and paid donation practices which have supported the blood supply at national level for many decades.

This change alone, wherever it occurred, contributed significantly to the safety of blood and the role, importance and value of voluntary, regular, non-remunerated blood donors have been unequivocally demonstrated.

**In this context, as a patient support organisation, TIF extends its deep gratitude and heartfelt thanks to each and every donor where he or she may live who gives blood on a regular, non-remunerated basis recognising that this is the best and most precious gift of life.**

Almost half of the global blood donations are collected in high-income countries, home to only about 19% of the world's population (<https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/health/voluntary-blood-donation>) and only 6-7% of beta thalassaemia patients. In most countries, where more than 80% of the patients' (with hemoglobin disorders) population is born and lives, equitable access to adequate and safe blood transfusion services still does not exist and moreover in many of these, costs are additionally involved.

The shortages in blood have been magnified across the world during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic with moderate to severe interruption of the cornerstone of management of these patients which is blood transfusion therapy.

It is hoped that one huge relevant lesson learned from the pandemic for all nations across the world, is the need to invest in preparedness programs in case of infectious disease outbreaks and more generally in public health including very importantly blood transfusion services.

To this new global fight, the blood donor continues to have a very substantial and irreplaceable role to perform and the Governments need to continue to empower and safeguard their safety and appropriate management.

**TIF THANKS EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE 24 MILLION BLOOD DONORS  
ACROSS THE WORLD**