

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



TIF HONOURS WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY 2021 - “GIVE BLOOD AND KEEP THE WORLD BEATING”

June 14 marks World Blood Donor Day, a very special occasion dedicated to raising global awareness about the insurmountable value of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation, and the need for safe, quality-assured and sufficient blood for those who need it. This includes patients with life-threatening conditions, such as thalassaemia and other haemoglobin disorders, who rely on regular blood transfusions for their survival and well-being. In addition, World Blood Donor Day constitutes a great opportunity to thank blood donors everywhere in the world for selflessly offering the gift of life to all those in need, including multi-transfused patients with thalassaemia.

Frequent and voluntary blood donations are of paramount importance to ensure the quality, safety and availability of blood and blood products for individuals in need in both normal and emergency situations, such as those the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed. As such, blood donations are an integral part of universal health coverage, and a key component of a resilient health system.

According to data obtained through the WHO Global Database on Blood Safety from 108 countries for the year 2018¹, an increase of 7.8 million blood donations from voluntary unpaid donors has been reported from 2013 to 2018. In total, 79 countries collect over 90% of their blood supply from voluntary unpaid blood donors. However, 56 countries still collect more than 50% of their blood supply from family/replacement or paid donors.

As far as blood transfusions are concerned, in low-income countries, up to 54 % of blood transfusions are given to children under 5 years of age, used more often to manage severe childhood anaemia.

TIF-collected and assessed data, as presented in the Federation’s recently published ‘Global Thalassaemia Review 2021’², indicate that more than 60% of patients in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where the majority of patients with thalassaemia is

¹ WHO, Blood safety and availability <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blood-safety-and-availability>

² TIF Global Thalassaemia Review 2021 www.thalassaemia.org.cy



born and resides, report recurring interruptions or postponements in their regular blood transfusions, more than 15 times a year. As a result, more than 75% of patients in LMICs who receive blood transfusions report haemoglobin (Hb) levels less than 8 g/dl, 55% of whom report Hb levels of 7-8 g/dl and 35% less than 7g/dl.

Consequently, equitable access to adequate and safe blood transfusion services for these countries, oftentimes involving additional costs for patients, still remains a pronounced challenge that must be effectively addressed.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and despite mobility restrictions, blood donors have risen above circumstances and helped maintain blood supplies as stable as possible in the majority of countries across the world.

The Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF) would like to underscore **the decisive contribution of committed, voluntary blood donors to improving the health of others in the community** and is inviting people to embrace the humanitarian call, as aptly designated by WHO for World Blood Donor Day 2021, to “Give blood and keep the world beating”.

TIF strongly urges national health authorities to invest adequate resources and to put in place legislations, systems and infrastructures to increase the collection of blood and blood products from voluntary, unpaid donors, to provide optimal donor care and high-quality blood and blood products, and to promote and implement appropriate clinical use of blood.

Moreover and in view of the ongoing revision of the European Blood, Tissue and Cells Directives (2002/98/EC and 2004/23/EC)³, TIF calls on the EU Commission to adapt the existing EU legislation on blood and blood components to the current needs of patients, donors, and healthcare professionals with a specific focus on maintaining quality standards through an overarching audit process at the regional level, and the implementation of mechanisms so as to ensure sufficiency and sustainability in blood supplies across all EU countries, especially in periods of infectious outbreaks.

Maintaining and reinforcing efficient and strong collaborations and partnerships between all relevant stakeholders is of fundamental importance to jointly address challenges at global, regional and national levels and universal access to safe, effective and high-quality blood products.

TIF extends its heartfelt thanks to all blood donors and asks them to continue this noble, life-saving act. Lastly, the Federation would like to congratulate and express its support to all blood donor associations and other non-governmental organisations, the WHO, the ISBT, the FIODS, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as affiliated healthcare professionals who are working tirelessly to make safe blood available to all our patients around the world.

³ European Commission website - Revision of the EU legislation on blood, tissues and cells.
https://ec.europa.eu/health/blood_tissues_organ/policy/revision_en

CONTACT:

Dr Androulla Eleftheriou, TIF Executive Director thalassaemia@cytanet.com.cy

Tel: +357 22 319129