Donor Research – an Upcoming Field of Interest All Over the World!

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In many countries, donor research has become a key subject in transfusion medicine, which is essential to assure a safe and sufficient blood supply in the coming decades. The current issue of TRANSFUSION MEDICINE AND HEMOTHERAPY gives a very exciting overview on the spectrum of blood donor management worldwide.

Masser et al. [1] describe the development in Australia where donor research is performed by the Blood Service and academic institutions in close cooperation all over the country, reflecting the complexity of the issue. Besides the recruitment of plasmapheresis donors, the role of pride as a key emotion in donor motivation and return is a field of major focus. Thus, collaborative donor research also contributes to advances in basic science.

Not only in Germany, the upper age limit for whole blood donations is a prevailing issue in almost all blood services, since a safe blood supply is a great challenge for the ageing societies of Western Europe and Northern America. However, the data of Zeiler et al. [2] confirm that adverse donor reactions and deferral rates decrease by age and thus elderly blood donors represent a safe and reliable age cohort with a growing relevance. On the other hand, young blood donors, i.e. first-time donors, in all likelihood can benefit from additional attention and education.

Newman [3] addresses the necessity for the management of young blood donors since they have the highest risk for vasovagal reactions. He focuses on both physiological and psychological parameters in order to increase safety and to decrease deferral rates. But also improvement of existing processes, dietary recommendations and, finally, a more focused donor education and attention to young donors suffering from fear or who have an increased risk profile for adverse reactions are being discussed in this integrated approach.

As the demographic change also affects Japan, a safe and sustainable blood supply will likewise be a great challenge for

the Japanese society in the upcoming years. Ngoma et al. [4] investigate reasons for blood donor deferral among Japanese students in northern Japan. In order to select suitable donors, deferral rates, reasons for deferral, and characteristics of deferred donors are being analyzed. The data suggest that continuous efforts are required to motivate potential donors to return after transient deferral. Interestingly, this study indicates that the frequency of deferral reasons is impacted by the blood center location.

The establishment of a forward-looking blood donor management will also be essential in China in order to ensure a safe and sufficient blood supply in the future. Shi et al. [5] focus on the national challenges in a country with a steadily growing demand for blood products on the one hand but a very low donation rate on the other. High first-time donor rates, long donation intervals, and small donation volumes are just a few examples for the various conditions that need to be considered in future strategies. Again, education, motivation, and an improved public awareness must be considered to be the key to overcome these obstacles.

In a Swiss study on motivators and barriers in the field of blood and stem cell donation, Bart et al. [6] show that the prospect of saving lives and solidarity are the two major reasons to donate or to enroll in a donor registry. In contrast, lack of information and deferral were identified to be the two key problems. This again emphasizes that further research on the various aspects of deferral, such as frequency and variation of medical reasons, deferral periods and donor information, are urgently needed.

Weidmann et al. [7] investigate donor return of first-time donors related to monetary compensation. Their data show that monetary reward may be used as a successful short-term strategy to recruit donors, but in order to achieve a long-term commitment to blood donation complementary strategies will be required.

Thus, the synopsis of these studies illustrates impressively that challenges of donor research may vary considerably between different countries and regions all over the world; how-

ever, it has become a global issue since the goal of all remains the same.

References

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