



Joint Press Release

Every Blood Donation is a Gift of Life

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On 14 June 2013, countries worldwide will celebrate World Blood Donor Day with events to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank voluntary unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood.

World Blood Donor Day was established by the World Health Assembly in 2004. The focus for this year's campaign – the 10th anniversary of World Blood Donor Day – is “every blood donation is a gift of life”. Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), will be visiting Jamaica to join in the country's celebrations as Jamaica has been given the honour of officially launching World Blood Donor Day 2013 in the Region of the Americas.

For every blood donation, at least three lives can be saved. Giving blood is a life-saving act of solidarity. Unfortunately many countries do not have an adequate supply of safe blood. The Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Fenton Ferguson says “the blood service meets just over 50% of requirements for needed blood with the actual level of blood collected averaging 30,000 units. Collection at most of our ten centres across the island is far below the usage in those regions which inevitably means that medical and surgical care could be seriously compromised. This is particularly significant in a country like ours where we see a number of trauma and accident related injuries each year.”

Ms. Margareta Sköld, PAHO/WHO Representative in Jamaica, says that “the need for safe and secure supplies of blood and blood products is universal. According to country data from 2011, the proportion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation is approximately 56% in the Caribbean. Only 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have achieved 100% voluntary non-remunerated blood donation.”

“Only 15% of our blood donors are volunteers and it must be underscored that voluntary donors are the safest source of blood, in contrast with other types of donors who pose a higher risk of transmitting diseases through transfusions. We need to increase blood collection urgently and in particular voluntary donations so that we can have a steady, adequate and safe supply of blood. There is a vibrant partnership between the National Blood Transfusion Service and several corporate entities which provide support for capacity development and the promotion of voluntary blood donation. Recruitment of young blood donors is key to the growth of the pool of voluntary blood donors. Youth aged 17 who are in high school as well as those attending tertiary institutions and youth camps all across Jamaica are making their contribution to this life-saving effort,” said Minister Ferguson.

Ms. Margareta Sköld, PAHO/WHO Representative in Jamaica, “congratulates the National Blood Transfusion Service for having a distinguished record of supporting the strengthening of Jamaica’s health system by providing safe blood and blood components for transfusion and clinical guidelines on patient management. 2013 represents the 65th anniversary of Jamaica’s National Blood Transfusion Service. Through a committed staff cadre working together, the Service assures cost effective collection, testing, processing and distribution of donated blood; as well as, providing reference testing services, clinical and technical expertise and research.”

Dr. Angela Scott, Director of the National Blood Transfusion Service, highlights some of the many accomplishments of the National Blood Transfusion Service. “In 2011, the Jamaica Ministry of Health in collaboration with PAHO launched its publication *Transfusion: Basic Guidelines, Principles and Practice* which was developed to provide guidance in the practice of transfusion medicine in accordance with good clinical practice. This year, Jamaica’s National Strategic Plan 2012-2017 for the National Blood Transfusion Service was published with the support of PAHO/WHO. Under the auspices of the Jamaica Bureau of Standards, a technical committee has been established to adapt the Caribbean Regional Standards for Blood Banks and Transfusion Services to the Jamaican context. The process of modernization of the National Blood Transfusion Service will ratify Jamaica’s willingness to continue the implementation of recommendations of the many resolutions on safe blood, passed by the World Health Assembly and PAHO over the last 35 years.”

To celebrate World Blood Donor Day 2013, the National Blood Transfusion Service is planning activities to be held in Emancipation Park in Kingston, Jamaica on 14 June 2013 with live streaming of the events to other parts of Jamaica as well as to other countries in the Region of the Americas.

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For more information visit the following websites:

Jamaica Ministry of Health website at: <http://www.moh.gov.jm/>

PAHO/WHO Jamaica website at: <http://new.paho.org/jam/>