

Promotion of voluntary blood donation among hospital employees

Sir,

A single unit of donated blood can save up to three lives; however, because of its limited shelf life, there is a need for constant blood donation. Relatives and friends of patients who require transfusion of blood and blood components usually constitute replacement donors. Under the guise of being friends or relatives of the patients, professional donors utilize this as an opportunity to donate and make money. Their relationship to patients cannot be verified by the blood bank staff. The emphasis has now rightly moved from a mere dependence on replacement blood donors to voluntary blood donations. Another issue is that many of the patients who come to our hospital are foreign with only one or two people attending to them and, therefore, are unable to provide the replacement blood required.

Thus, the need to promote voluntary blood donation among the staff of our hospital was mooted to motivate everyone to donate regularly. A meeting was held with the hospital management and a decision taken to give incentives to employees who donate to improve our voluntary blood donor registry. Apart from routine blood donation cards, donation certificate, and a token of appreciation, employees who donate blood would be given an extra day's leave in the next year. Therefore, every employee can have a total of 4 days leave for donating blood (blood donation leave) per year, provided he/she donates blood every 3 months. Furthermore, if an employee donates blood four or more times, he/she would also be entitled to a free health package from the hospital for himself/herself or a family member.

There were only 63 donations by hospital employees in the whole year, preceding the introduction of the incentive scheme in the hospital. In the 1st year of its introduction,

the blood bank had more than 150 donations in 8 months and expected to double this by the beginning of the next year. Not only there was an increase in the donors of whole blood but also the number of voluntary donors for platelet apheresis required for many patients (both national and foreign) especially during dengue outbreak increased considerably [Table 1].

Several economic and psychological studies have shown that incentives have negative effects on prosocial behaviors such as blood donation.^[1-3] In a 2008 study, Ellingsen and Johannesson found that using incentives may indicate to the blood donors that blood banks had a mercenary agenda.^[4] On the other hand, some studies have suggested that nonmonetary incentives such as social recognition and days off may encourage donors to make an extra donation per year.^[5] Although this project is still in its early days, the evidence is that nonmonetary incentives such as paid time off work and health screening tests can be used to motivate potential blood donors.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Table 1: Voluntary platelet apheresis donation on call to voluntary whole blood donors (during dengue period)

Group/parameters	B (+ve/-ve)	O (+ve/-ve)	A (+ve/-ve)	AB (+ve/-ve)
Registered donors	37	41	15	31
Voluntary plateletpheresis donation	12	18	4	22
Response rate (%)	32.5	43	27	71

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