

Concern over the continuously low level of blood stock in Hong Kong and excessively long waiting time for organ transplant

The reply of the Department of Health (“DH”):

Background

In 1952, the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS) launched the city’s first and only voluntary non-remunerated blood programme. At present, the BTS operates nine donor centres, two university campus donor centres, four mobile blood collection teams and one medicoach.

The nine donor centres are distributed over various districts in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories, including Causeway Bay, Central District, Mong Kok, Kwun Tong, King's Park (headquarters), West Kowloon, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Yuen Long. The two university campus donor centres are situated in The University of Hong Kong and The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong. The mobile teams provide services for secondary schools, tertiary institutions, industrial and commercial organisations, government departments and community groups. The mobile vehicle is parked outside Fanling MTR Station or Tai Po Civic Centre.

In 2015, the BTS recorded another historical height of 261,110 units of collected blood which grew by 2.8% compared to the previous year. In the past five years, the annual blood collection figures are listed as below:

Year	No. of blood units collected
2015	261,110
2014	254,053
2013	247,041
2012	244,594
2011	234,086

Increasing Demand for Blood

The BTS needs to recruit 1,100 blood donors daily in order to provide sufficient blood to all hospitals of Hong Kong for clinical blood transfusion services. Despite many challenges in blood collection, the BTS managed to provide sufficient and safe blood for patients timely with the unfailing support from all enthusiastic blood donors.

By referring to the forecast of blood use in 2016 from all hospitals in Hong Kong, the BTS estimates that the demand for red cell products will rise by 2.1%. To fully satisfy the need of clinical blood transfusion for all patients in Hong Kong, the BTS has to collect not less than 266,000 units in 2016 which means an addition of 10,000 units of whole blood.

With the aging population and commissioning of several public and private hospitals, the demand for blood will maintain at a high level on a rapid increase. For the past five years, the blood supply in Hong Kong already grew by 10.4%. According to the figures from the Hospital Authority, 220,476 units of red blood cells were used for blood transfusion in 2015. Medical and geriatric patients accounted for 48.9% of the blood usage while surgical and orthopedic patients were the second major blood users. Meanwhile, about 62% of red blood cells were used by the patients over the age of 60 and 28.2% for those over the age of 80.

In addition, the proportion of first-time donors and first-time donors at the age of 16 has been decreasing in recent years, which affects stable blood supply in the long run. The number of first-time donors in 2015 was 36,993, declined by 10.3% when compared to 41,249 in 2013. The number of first-time donors at the age of 16 in 2015 was 7,109 which dropped remarkably by 28.7% compared to 9,971 in 2013.

Proactively Exploring Blood Sources

To tackle these challenges, the BTS is taking a proactive approach in expanding its service network and exploring blood sources. The West Kowloon Donor Centre, the BTS's ninth blood donor centre and currently the biggest donor centre in town, commenced its service on 11 January 2016. Apart from strengthening the overall blood collection capacity, the BTS has been helping more patients in need through Apheresis donation, in particular those with leukaemia, other cancers undergoing treatment and those receiving bone marrow transplant. In parallel, the BTS has been employing every effort in inviting youngsters to donate blood and encourage them to be regular donors to stabilize the long-term blood supply.

The BTS has been proactively extending its services and network to recruit blood donors and to further facilitate citizens to come forward to donate blood. For opening hours, the BTS has closely monitored the pattern in service use of blood donors in every donor centre in order to cater for the demand from the community according to the actual situation. In response to members' views on blood collection services in the Central and Western District, the BTS operates its Central District Donor Centre to

provide blood collection services. The centre is located at 1/F, Tung Ming Building, 40-42 Des Voeux Road Central and the service hours is from 11am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday. According to the existing demand, the donor centre can meet the demand of blood donors working in the district. In fact, since the tenancy market of commercial premises in the Central and Western District is active, it is never easy for the BTS to identify a suitable location for blood donor centre.

On planning the service time-table for the medicoach, the BTS needs to liaise with relevant government departments on arranging suitable parking locations by causing no disturbance to other road users. Since the medicoach requires electricity in operation, the three-phase power supply must be available at the parking location. The BTS needs to take these conditions into consideration for planning the outreach schedule. Moreover, the BTS's medicoach is an articulated vehicle modified from a container. Since the traffic in the Central and Western District is comparatively busy and many road sections have been designated as restricted zones at all or partial times, together with mostly steep roads in the Mid-Levels, the BTS has great difficulty in arranging medicoach to station in the district.

To bring forward the work on publicity and public education, the BTS has proactively exploring various ways to develop social media platforms and interactive videos, in addition to routine school and corporate blood donation talks, various community activities as well as production of publicity leaflets. In 2015, the BTS launched the "BTS ABO channel" on YouTube to play videos and interactive information. At the same time, in order to recruit youngsters as regular blood donors, the BTS has also started to rearrange the layout of Facebook page to extend our all-round reach and enhance interactive communication with them. To stabilise Hong Kong's blood supply in the long term, regular donations from citizens and recruitment work of new blood donors are very important. The BTS will continue to partner with different community organisations to step up publicity work and promote the importance of the life-saving mission to increase the overall number of blood collection.

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