

12 June 2018, Cairo, Egypt – On the occasion of World Blood Donor Day 2018, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean reiterates that the number of regular, voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations must be greatly increased in countries of the Region in order to ensure a reliable supply of safe blood for patients whose lives depend on it.

Blood transfusion saves millions of lives every year. It has an essential, life-saving role in maternal and child care and during the emergency response to man-made and natural disasters. Transfusion of blood and blood products also help patients suffering from life-threatening conditions live longer and with a higher quality of life, and support complex medical and surgical procedures.

This year, the theme of World Blood Donor Day is “Be there for someone else. Give blood. Share life.” The campaign focuses on blood donation as an act of community solidarity to care for one another in times of need and draws attention to the role that regular, voluntary donation systems play in encouraging people to care for one another and in promoting community cohesion.

“An adequate blood supply that meets the needs of patients can only be ensured through regular donations by voluntary, unpaid blood donors,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “However, in many countries in the Region, blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available, while also ensuring its quality and safety.”

About seven million blood donations are collected in the Region every year, with wide variation in annual donation rates among countries. While the Region has 9% of the world’s population, the number of blood donations collected in the Region account for only 6% of the global supply. Blood donation rates in six countries of the Region are at levels less than recommended by WHO, and only half of the donations in the Region are from voluntary, unpaid blood donors.

WHO encourages all countries to establish nationally coordinated and appropriately regulated blood systems based on regular, voluntary non-remunerated blood donations as the foundation of a safe and sustainable blood supply. Countries dependent on family/replacement donations must convert these donors to regular, voluntary unpaid donors.

World Blood Donor Day has been celebrated annually on 14 June since 2004, with the aim of thanking voluntary, unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gift of blood and to raise wider awareness that blood donation is an altruistic action that benefits all of society.

The Day is also an opportunity to persuade leaders in the health sector to widely increase public awareness of the need for committed year-round, regular voluntary non-remunerated blood donation, as an expression of the fundamental human values of altruism, respect, empathy and kindness to others and as a manifestation of community participation in the health system.

Related link

[Message from Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari Regional Director WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region on the occasion of World Blood Donor Day, 14 June 2018](#)

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