

MOTIVATION AND RETENTION OF VOLUNTARY, NON-REMUNERATED BLOOD DONORS. LITHUANIAN CASE

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Pateikta 2015 m. spalio 20 d., parengta spausdinti 2016 m. vasario d.

DOI:10.13165/SPV-16-1-9-06

Summary

Various scientific researches reveals that blood donated by non-remunerated blood donors is safer in many aspects. That is why identifying motivational factors affecting blood donation and recruitment of safe and low-risk donors is a challenge all around the world. Many researches were done in order to identify motivation for blood donating. But research do not study how motivation tools influence and affects motivation and retention of voluntary non-remunerated blood donors and there is a lack of scientific evidence how legislation regulation and different motivation tools applied really influence and affect motivation of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors. Analysing the situation of blood donation in Lithuania and the experience of motivating donors could help find the connections between the decisions made and proven. The display of these connections is important because it could help to identify the most important factors for the improvement of an object researched as well as create possibilities to purposefully act, fulfil expedient intervention into the processes of legislation regulation and motivation of blood donors in order to seek to improve them and achieve better results in voluntary,

non-remunerated blood donating. Because of the importance of the question, the goal of this research was to study motivation, attraction, and retention of regular blood donors in Lithuania. The results of the study show that moral motivating, coming closer to donors (working on mobile sites), bringing personal attention to each donor inspire for donating more than material forms of motivation. And being blood donor becomes the matter of prestige.

Keywords: *blood donation, voluntary blood donation, motivation of the donors.*

Introduction

Over a million blood units are collected from donors around the world every year. Nevertheless, many more still need to be collected to meet the global demand, ensure sufficient and timely provision of blood¹. The fragile balance between blood supply and demand forces search for more efficient ways to recruit blood donors². Remuneration for blood donors is not generally accepted across the European Union. It is feared that remunerated donors might be with increased risk to transmit infectious diseases³. This knowledge established safe blood supply based on voluntary, non-remunerated donors in many countries across the world⁴. Voluntary and non-remunerated is one of the factors reducing the risk of transmitting the infections of donor origin⁵. That brings multidisciplinary approach, whereas medical issue meets the issue of social responsibility and voluntary.

The psychology and motivation of blood donors is well understood in developed countries. Identifying motivational factors affecting blood donation and recruitment of safe and low-risk donors is a challenge all around the world⁶. Many researches were done in order to identify motivation for blood donating. Some authors mark the importance of covering part of donors' socioeconomic needs⁷. Incentives offered to donors varied from health-related incentives such

¹ Damesyn, M.A., Glynn, S.A., Schreiber, G.B., Ownby, H.E., Bethel, J., Fridey, J., McMullen, Q., Garratty, G., Busch, M.P. 2003. *Behavioral and infectious disease risks in young blood donors: implications for recruitment*. Transfusion. Vol. 43, p. 1596–603.

² Ferguson, E. 1996. *Predictors of future behavior: a review of the psychological literature on blood donation*. British Journal of Health Psychology. Vol. 1, p. 287–308.

³ Zeiler, T., Kretschmer, V. 1995. *Survey of blood donors on the topic of "reimbursement for blood donors"*. Infusionsther Transfusionsmed. Vol. 22(1), p. 19–24.

⁴ Dhingra, N. 1996. *The blood supply world wide*, in Lozano, M., Contreras, M. (eds) *Global Perspectives in Transfusion*, p. 5–23.

⁵ Eastlund, T. 1998. *Monetary blood donation incentives and the risk of transfusion-transmitted infection*. Transfusion, Vol. 38, p. 874–882.

⁶ Sandborg, E. 2000. *Getting people to give blood*. Vox Sanguinis, Vol. 78, p. 297–301.

⁷ Rouger, P., Hossenlopp, C. 2005. *Blood Transfusion in Europe. The White Book*. Paris, France: Elsevier Publication.

as free medical testing⁸ including cholesterol and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening, blood credit, to economic incentives including tickets to events, lottery or raffle tickets, but certainly not money are emphasized by another researchers⁹. Education also called as a factor positively influencing on attitudes towards blood donation^{10,11}. Blood donors' satisfaction to the time and location of donation were found to be adherent to behaviours of blood donors^{12,13}. However, not only socio-economic needs, but a range of socio-demographic, organizational, physiological and psychological factors may influence people's willingness to donate blood¹⁴. Blood donation decision might be tempted by some covariates like altruism, social behaviour, social pressure and replacement^{15,16}. J. Žemguliienė empirically confirms the causal positive effect of donor motivation on donor relationship satisfaction and loyalty. The study also reveals the main motives for donation relevant to the surveyed donor population: to get benefit for the health during the donation procedure, to get remuneration, to fulfil the need for self-esteem by feeling respected in society, to fulfil the need for affiliation by helping other people.

But not only is the motivation of blood donors is an important issue. The retention of regular blood donors is even a bigger challenge. L. Kasraian and S. A. Torab Jahromi say that though the majority of people are able to donate blood, only a small part of them donate blood, and even lesser part of them does it on a regular basis¹⁷. The research performed by C. K. Lee et al shows that only 6% of the first-time donors become regular donors, and 62% never come again for another donation¹⁸. Thus, the main policy of the blood transfusion service is

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- ⁸ McMahon, R., Byrne, M. 2008. *Predicting donation among an Irish sample of donors and non-donors: Extending the theory of planned behavior*. *Transfusion*, Vol. 48, p. 321–331.
- ⁹ Jacobs, B., Berege, Z.A. 1995. *Attitudes and beliefs about blood donation among adults in Mwanza Region, Tanzania*. *East Africa Medicine Journal*, Vol. 72, p. 345–348.
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- ¹³ Schlumpf, K.S., Glynn, S.A., Schreiber, G.B., Wright, D.J., Randolph Steele W., Tu, Y., et al. 2008. *Factors influencing donor return*. *Transfusion*, Vol. 48, p. 264–272.
- ¹⁴ Masser, B.M., White, K.M., Hyde, M.K., Terry, D.J. 2008. *The psychology of blood donation: Current research and future directions*. *Transfusion Medical Review*, Vol. 22, p. 215–33.
- ¹⁵ Oswalt, R.M., Hoff, T.E. 1977. *The motivations of blood donors and non-donors: a community survey*. *Transfusion*, Vol. 15, p. 68–73.
- ¹⁶ Burnett, J. J. 1981. *Psychographic and demographic characteristics of blood donors*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 8, p. 62–66.
- ¹⁷ Kasraian, L., Torab Jahromi, S.A. 2007. *Prevalence viral infections (HCV, HBS, HIV) in Shiraz blood donors from 2000 to 2005*. *Blood*, Vol. 3.
- ¹⁸ Lee, C.K., Hong, J., Hung, A. 2008. *An update of blood donor recruitment and retention in Hong Kong*. *Asian J Transfus Sci*, Vol. 2, 47–50.

motivation, attraction, and retention of regular blood donors¹⁹. The importance of these issues calls governmental and non-governmental commitment and required the need to improve research evidence in this area of practice.

Because of the importance of the question, **the goal of this research was to study motivation, attraction, and retention of regular blood donors in Lithuania**. Though there are some research studies concerning blood donation service in Lithuania performed (e.g. Stonienė, 2003; Vilkelienė, 2008; Gelmanienė, 2013; etc.), still most of the studies analyse the safety of blood and blood products, were performed to evaluate the organizational culture in the blood donation institution, and were dedicated to emphasize the importance of blood safety by voluntary and altruistic blood donation. Though there are some researches that determine the behaviours and attitudes towards voluntary blood donation and understanding the reasons for donating and not donating blood done (Kazakauskas, 2013; etc.) there is a lack of scientific evidence how legislation regulation and different motivation tools applied really influence and affect motivation of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors. Analysing the situation of blood donation in Lithuania and the experience of motivating donors could help find the connections between the decisions made and proven. The display of these connections is important because it could help to identify the most important factors for the improvement of an object researched as well as create possibilities to purposefully act, fulfil expedient intervention into the processes of legislation regulation and motivation of blood donors in order to seek to improve them and achieve better results in voluntary, non-remunerated blood donating. Due to practical relevance, taking into account the lack of scientific research the issue of connection between decisions and motivation tools and their affection to voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation situation in Lithuania was chosen for this research.

The case study of Lithuanian National Blood Centre was chosen for this research. It was decided to review the blood donation situation in Lithuania during period 2006–2015 and after that to review recent year's legislative framework, strategic decisions, concerning blood donating, and motivation of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors. After that connections between strategic decisions and their influence and affect to motivation of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors will be defined.

1. Legislative framework of blood donation in Lithuania

Legislative of blood donation in Lithuania is based on the principle that human blood may be taken from a donor for transfusion purposes or for the

¹⁹ Tan, L.K. 2012. *Challenges ahead*. Annex Academia Medical Singapore, Vol. 41(6), p. 236–238.

purpose of production of blood products only of the donor's free will and with the latter's consent. The relations connected with the taking of human blood and production, export, import and transfusion of blood products shall be regulated by the Law on Blood Donation. And Law on Blood Donation includes the ordinance of the Government; orders approving the program "Developing of non-remunerated, voluntary donation for years 2004, 2005, 2006–2015 and 2016–2020"; nomenclature of blood establishments; principles of donor selection, blood donations, testing and production; rights and responsibilities of the blood donors; compensations to the blood donors; principles of transfusions; notifications of serious adverse reactions of recipients, etc.

It is important to mention, that the entire ordinance for regulating blood donations is adopted from the Directives of the European Parliament and of the Council. The European Union legislation regulating blood donations emphasizes the necessity for the member states of the European Union to restore public confidence and to ensure the provision for safe blood products which quality must fulfil the strict European Union standards, to restore public confidence. The main problem is transition from paid and relative's blood donations to unpaid (voluntary) donations, which is revealed in the first part of thesis. It is said that modern blood-transfusion practice has been founded on the principles of voluntary donor services, anonymity of both donor and recipient, benevolence of the donor, and absence of profit on the part of the establishments involved in blood transfusion services. So Member States are obliged to take the necessary measures to encourage voluntary and unpaid blood donations with a view to ensuring that blood and blood components are in so far as possible provided from such donations.

World Health Organization's documents (e.g. The Melbourne Declaration on 100 % voluntary non-remunerated donation of blood and blood components, 11 June 2009; Towards 100 % voluntary blood donation, A global framework for action, 2010) regulate that in all the countries the blood components from 2020 must be prepared only from the blood donated by voluntary, non-remunerated donors. The main motivation to promote voluntary, non-remunerated donation is ensuring the safety of the blood. Persons donating blood or blood components not for financial compensation do not have the intention to hide the lifestyle, risk factors and / or health status.

According to that and in order to ensure blood safety, the recruitment and retention of voluntary, non-remunerated donors, Lithuania chose to guide these main principles: (1) State control over blood transfusion service, (2) no private blood establishments, (3) no market in blood transfusion service and (4) paying more attention and giving financial sources to the program for developing of non-remunerated, voluntary donations.

Although the program for developing voluntary, non-remunerated donations is under the State control, each blood establishment organizes own voluntary, non-remunerated donations: advertising, lectures, mobile sessions, celebration of World Blood Donor day, etc.

2. Blood donation situation in Lithuania

In order to understand the scope of National Blood Centre activities, a brief overview of Lithuanian blood establishment is provided.

One public blood establishment (National Blood Centre), one private blood establishment and two university hospital based blood establishments were responsible for organising the blood donation in Lithuania since year 1993 to August, 2013. But State Health Care Accreditation Agency under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania has suspended the license of Health issued to private blood establishment in April, 2013 and cancelled in August, 2013. So since August, 2013 National Blood Centre and two university hospital based blood establishments responsible for organising the blood donation in Lithuania.

The production of university hospital based blood establishments is used mainly for hospital purposes and the lack is compensated by National Blood Centre. And National Blood Centre is public institution (non-profit), established in 2003 by the Ministry of Health by merging two separate blood centres in Vilnius and Klaipeda. The main goal of the centre is to provide safe blood products to Lithuanian hospitals and to promote voluntary non-remunerated blood donations. Activity of the centre is based in 5 towns of Lithuania (Vilnius, Klaipėda, Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Kaunas). Working on fixed and mobile sites National Blood Centre is serving all hospitals in Lithuania. This brief overview shows that National Blood Centre is the main blood establishment in Lithuania. That is why its activity is very important in Lithuanian blood donation context.

Let us take a look how number of donations varied during recent years (Fig. 1).

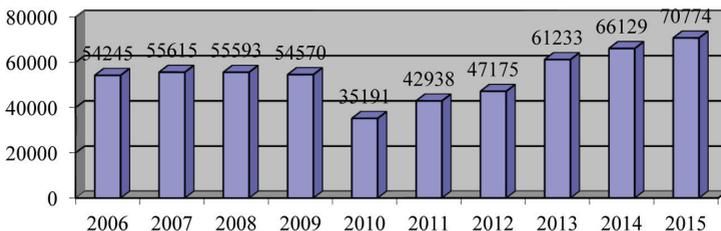


Figure 1. Number of National Blood Centre donations, year 2006–2015

The activity of this period is based by the Program for the promotion of non-remunerated donation for the year 2006–2015. The objectives of the programme

were divided into four phases: the objective of the first phase was to reach 20% voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations by December 31st, 2007. The objective of the second phase was to reach 35% voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations by December 31st, 2010. The objective of the third phase was to reach 38% voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations by December 31st, 2013. And the objective of the second phase was to reach 50% voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations by December 31st, 2015. Numbers of the voluntary, non-remunerated blood donations are shown in Figure 2.

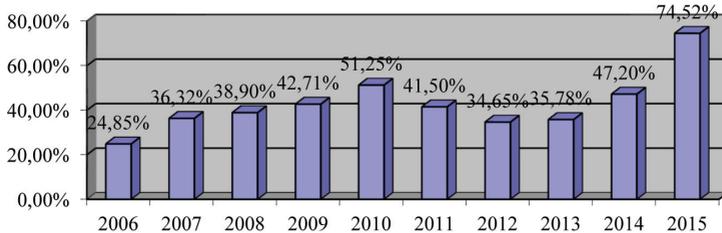


Figure 2. Percentage of National Blood Centre non-remunerated donations, year 2006–2015

It is obvious that the objectives of the phase 1 and 2 have been achieved. The reasons for which the objectives of the phase 3 were not achieved were discussed in the governmental level. It was decided that competition between public and national blood establishments may be the reason. Unethical and improper communication between the public and national blood establishments, dissemination of unfairly negative information about the activities of public blood establishments, and the injurious effects of the black technology were recognized as the reasons causing peoples distrust.

In response to the situation and in accordance with the obligations of the European Parliament and of the Council and World Health Organization some strategic decisions on the Governmental and institutional level were done. As it was said before, State Health Care Accreditation Agency under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania has suspended the license of Health issued to private blood establishment in April, 2013 and cancelled in August, 2013. And blood donation establishments and nongovernmental organizations signed the agreement on cooperation for promoting voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation. It was agreed to cooperate in the field of dissemination of the idea of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation and promotion of it through generally acceptable existing and new media features.

Due to the clear Government position about voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation the unrest has fallen, society saw that only public non-profit

organizations may engage in blood donation activities. That highly increased people confidence in blood donation.

Along with Government activities National Blood Centre made some institutional changes and decided to move to another donors motivating strategy. Institutional changes include development and expansion. New blood collection points for only non-remunerated donors to give blood were founded; a lot of trips to new places and events like community festivals, feast, etc. were organized. Institutional shake-up was a part of institutional changes. Special department for implementation of blood donation program was established, specialists and not random people were involved in the organisation of blood donation, and coordinating activities with the branches of the National Blood Centre become better. New image of the Centre was also created. Image of the National Blood Centre as the blood centre of entire Lithuania was and still is created with the new symbolism.

Communication and collaboration with the medical doctors and hospitals was improved. Annual international conference concerning blood donations, transfusion and haematology are organizing. International speakers are invited to do presentations in Lithuania. Most often after that Lithuanian speakers are invited to do presentations and share the good practice also.

The main aspects of the new non-remunerated donations strategy are the prestigious donor's image building, moving toward the donor, but not only calling him. Different activities help to do that. Some of them need to be detailed and described.

It is noticed that involving famous people – musicians, singers, artists, sportsmen, etc. – is very well accepted by donors and potential donors. Famous people talk about donating blood, donate blood by themselves and bring the message to the society. Donors recognize this message very inspirable.

Inspirable message to donate blood comes from the church too. Famous priests and monks were invited to talk about donating blood and sharing oneself with people. It seems that people receives that information well. Working on mobile sites during the different church events and feasts demonstrates that. A lot of voluntary, non-remunerated donors donate blood during these events.

Not only church, but politicians both at the national and municipality level understand the important of the blood donation. Many of them became blood donors during different events in the municipalities. And after that they come for donating again and again every time the mobile team of the National Blood Centre comes to town. In these cases mayors often become the non-remunerated blood donation flagman in the municipalities.

Another way of communication is directed to non-governmental organizations. There are several of them in Lithuania that are oriented to transplantation problems. All the organisations share good practice, organize

conferences and events, share information about each other's activities. That creates strong community connections.

The notion that a strong country is a strong community ties and mutual assistance is entrenched in the contacts with the military and paramilitary organizations. Different military corps is involved in blood donation campaigns. Soldiers are always voluntary, non-remunerated donors with own blood donation traditions. It is noticed that more and more soldiers become blood donors every year.

On more directions for working are schoolchildren. Many lectures and tours in the National Blood Centre are organized yearly. And this activity brings the results and creates nice tradition – more and more youths come to celebrate their 18th birthday by donating blood. They call it “becoming an adult meaningfully”. After this first donation they come for donating periodically.

It is the must to mention that all the communication is done mostly by the persons working at the National Blood Centre. But voluntaries often join the activities as helpers. Most often these voluntaries are young people. Talking about the donating from the young person brings confidence to the society.

It should be mentioned that each voluntary, non-remunerated blood donor get some small tokens after each donation. It is a tradition since old times and not considered as a form of material motivation.

Conclusions and suggestions

The realization of the voluntary, non-remunerated donation strategy is hard day to day work done by the specialists of the National Blood Centre and voluntaries. And it brings the results. As Figure 2 shows, year 2014 was the break point in Lithuania blood donation system. The percentage of voluntary, non-remunerated donors rises strongly. And results of the year 2015 are better than expected.

Going back and analysing how decisions made and new strategy for recruitment of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors could influence and affect the situation of donations in Lithuania it is evident that decisions were made timely and the strategy chosen was right.

The results shows that moral motivating, coming closer to donors (working on mobile sites), bringing personal attention to each donor inspire for donating more than material forms of motivation. And being blood donor becomes the matter of prestige.

Lithuanian National Blood Centre's strategy for recruitment voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors brings the good results. Remembering that identifying motivational factors affecting blood donation and recruitment of safe and low-risk donors is a challenge all around the world (Sandborg, 2000),

it could be said, that the activities that brought good results in Lithuania could become good practice guide for recruitment and motivation of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors in other countries also.

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Neatlygintinos kraujo donorystės skatinimas Lietuvoje

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Santrauka. Mokslo tyrėjai, įvairių nacionalinių ir tarptautinių institucijų ir organizacijų (tarp jų, Europos Komisija, Parlamentas, Pasaulio sveikatos organizacija) pažymi savanoriškos, neatlygintinos kraujo donorystės svarbą. Pagrindinis motyvas neatlygintinai donorystei skatinti – kraujo saugumo užtikrinimas. Mokslškai pagrįsta, jog asmenys, duodantys kraujo ar jo sudėtinių dalių ne dėl piniginės kompensacijos, neturi motyvacijos slėpti savo gyvenimo būdo, rizikos faktorių bei sveikatos būklės. Dėl to Pasaulio sveikatos organizacija įpareigojo visas valstybes nuo 2020 m. kraujo komponentus ruošti tik iš neatlygintinų donorų kraujo. Vykdamt šiuos įpareigojimus ir siekiant maksimalios paruošiamo produkto kokybės įvairios šalys kuria strategijas ir įgyvendina priemones neatlygintinų kraujo donorų telkimui, o mokslo tyrėjai vykdo tyrimus, siekdami nustatyti efektyvias donorus motyvuojančias priemones. Visgi pasigendama tyrimų, kaip vyksta pasirinktų strategijų įgyvendinimas, kaip pasiteisina vienos ar kitos pasirinktos priemonės, kokią tendenciją jos sukelia ilgesniame laikotarpyje.

Dėl to buvo pasirinkta nagrinėti kraujo donorystės skatinimo situacija Lietuvoje. Šiuo metu šalyje kraujo donorystės veiklą vykdo trys valstybinės institucijos: du ligoninių kraujo centrai ir Nacionalinis kraujo centras. Ligoninių kraujo centrai kraujo donorystės veiklą vykdo siekdamos patenkinti savo poreikį, Nacionalinis kraujo centras padeda joms esant kraujo komponentų trūkumui ir aptarnauja likusias Lietuvos ligonines. Nacionalinį kraujo centrą vertinant kaip pagrindinę kraujo donorystės įstaigą Lietuvoje, ji pasirinkta šio tyrimo atveju.

Patvirtinus Neatlygintinos kraujo donorystės propagavimo 2006–2015 metų programą, pagrindiniai siekiai suskirstyti į keturis etapus. Pirmojo etapo tikslas – iki 2007 m. gruodžio 31 d. pasiekti 20 proc. neatlygintinų kraujo donacijų, antrojo etapo tikslas – iki 2010 m. gruodžio 31 d. pasiekti 35 proc. neatlygintinų donacijų, trečiojo etapo tikslas – iki 2013 m. gruodžio 31 d. pasiekti 38 proc. neatlygintinų donacijų ir ketvirtojo etapo tikslas – iki 2015 m. gruodžio 31 d. pasiekti 50 proc. neatlygintinų donacijų. Įvertinus rezultatus matyti, kad trečiojo etapo tikslas nepasiektas. Ieškant priežasčių manoma, kad nepakankamą neatlygintinos kraujo donorystės plėtrą galėjo lemti neetiškas privačios (2013 metais uždarytos) ir valstybinių kraujo donorystės įstaigų bendravimas, nesąžininga kon-

kurencija, nepagrįstai neigiamos informacijos apie valstybinių kraujo donorystės įstaigų veiklą skleidimas (ypač 2011 m.). 2010–2011 metais stipriai kritęs visuomenės pasitikėjimas kraujo donorystės sistema reikalavo esminių pokyčių ir naujų strateginių sprendimų valstybiniu ir instituciniu mastu. Buvo pasirašytas visų kraujo donorystės įstaigų ir nevyriausybinių donorų organizacijų susitarimas dėl bendradarbiavimo propaguojant neatlygintą kraujo donorystę. Susitarta bendradarbiaujant skleisti neatlygintinos kraujo donorystės idėją, skatinti neatlygintą kraujo donorystę visomis visuotinai priimtinomis priemonėmis, bendrauti etiškai ir teikti tik teisingą informaciją apie kraujo donorystės veiklą. Nacionalinis kraujo centras, savo ruožtu, taip pat ėmėsi veiklos pokyčių. Viena strateginių krypčių – donoro įvaizdžio kūrimas, kita – ėjimas link donoro, o ne tik jo kvietimas atvykti.

Analizuojant šių sprendimų ir visų vykdomų veiklų poveikį neatlygintų donorų srautui matyti, kad 2014 metai gali būti vadinami lūžio metais Lietuvos kraujo donorystėje, kuomet neatlygintų donorų procentas žymiai išaugo, o 2015 metais neatlygintų donorų skaičius keliamus reikalavimus ženkliai viršijo.

Raktiniai žodžiai: kraujo donorystė, neatlygintinas kraujo donoras, donorų motyvacija.

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