



MEDIA RELEASE

Life-blood for the nation: time to say ‘thank you’

The South African National Blood Service (SANBS) celebrates the dedication of its blood donors this June and reminds the public that, as our population grows and access to healthcare improves, the demand for blood supplies to keep people alive in medical emergencies is constantly increasing.

Launching South African Blood Donor Month in Johannesburg today (2 June), SANBS COO Ravi Reddy highlighted the challenge: “Our target for 2015 is 815 509 units of blood. We will only achieve this if many of our present donors are able to increase the number of donations they make and if members of the public come forward to replace donors who have given generously over the years but can no longer do so.”

South Africa is one of only 62 countries worldwide where the entire blood supply is donated free of charge by volunteers. On 14 June every year, the country joins with others across the globe to mark World Blood Donor Day and expands this event into a month-long campaign to highlight the critical importance of blood donation.

“No health system can do its job without a dependable supply of safe blood,” Mr Reddy said. “It is nothing short of a miracle that this vital aspect of healthcare is in the hands of volunteers and that they never fail us.

“Many of us do not appreciate the sheer range of situations in which blood plays a life-or-death role. These include everyday occurrences such as child birth and non-emergency surgery, as well as rare blood diseases, cancer treatment and major trauma. Any one of us could find that we owe our life to the generosity of a stranger who gives the gift of blood,” explained Mr Reddy.

Blood donors must be free of blood-borne pathogens, such as HIV and hepatitis B, to protect patients from infection. The sheer size of the HIV epidemic in South Africa raised doubts

Thank you for saving my life

Tashnika Rambali:

“Every donor that’s donated for me has given me a chance to fight and live a full, long life. To every donor that donates thank you because there are so many other people who need blood ... Your blood is valuable to them, you don’t just save that person you save that entire family by giving them that blood.”

Thank you for saving my life

Patience Thusi:

“To the people out there who are donating blood I am truly grateful because they have contributed a lot to bringing my life back.”

Thank you for saving my life

Matt Lathan:

“I wouldn’t be standing here today if it wasn’t for a great medical team, the support of family and friends and the miracle life-saving act of receiving blood. If it wasn’t for the blood ... I would definitely have died. Whoever you are, wherever you are, thank you.”

Thank you for helping us save

some years ago that SANBS would be able to maintain infection-free blood supplies and, at the same time, keep pace with the demand for blood.

Mr Reddy commented: “We are very proud to say that South Africa has met this challenge. We have diversified our blood donor base and we do not distinguish on the grounds of race, sexual orientation or place of residence. Through better communication with prospective donors and by embracing ultra-sensitive testing technology to detect HIV infection, we have had not a single reported case of transfusion-acquired HIV in the last nine years.”

lives

Dr Monica Vaithilingum:
“From the clinicians who require blood products I am intensely grateful because on a daily basis I am ordering urgent blood or urgent platelets. From my patients who are nameless and faceless to the donors I’d like to say thank you.”

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About the South African National Blood Service (SANBS)

SANBS is a non-profit organisation which aims to provide all patients with sufficient, safe, quality blood products and related medical services in a sustainable manner. It is rated among the best in the world in the provision of blood and blood products, as well as research and training. SANBS operates across South Africa with the exclusion of the Western Cape, and supports its counterparts across the SADC region.

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