

Live Performance and Installation
Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, DC
August 7-10th, 2013

DEFERRAL



**According to the FDA
men who have had sex
with other men
anytime since 1977
are currently **deferred** as
blood donors**

Mary Coble's performance, **Deferral,
addresses the FDA's policy of refusing
blood donations from men who have had
sex with men since 1977.**

**Over four days in the Corcoran's atrium,
Coble and a number of gay men encode
the curtains of an anatomical theater with
text and images from blood donor
campaigns, regulations and debates.
The artist writes using her own blood,
drawn onsite, while her collaborators work
with thread in place of their 'illegal' blood.**

**Over the course of the performance, the
performers actions create an increasingly
tangled web, enveloping and impeding
their shared space while reclaiming the
image of the male hero.**

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DEFERRAL

International Morse Code

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Blood Donations from Men Who Have Sex with Other Men Questions and Answers

What is FDA's policy on blood donations from men who have sex with other men?

Men who have had sex with other men (MSM), at any time since 1977 (the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in the United States) are currently deferred as blood donors. This is because MSM are, as a group, at increased risk for HIV, hepatitis B and certain other infections that can be transmitted by transfusion.

Why doesn't FDA allow men who have had sex with men to donate blood?

FDA's primary responsibility with regard to blood and blood products is to assure the safety of patients who receive these life-saving products. FDA uses multiple layers of safeguards in its approach to ensuring blood safety, which include donor screening and deferral based on risk factors, blood testing for markers of infection, inventory controls, and deferral registries. The use of these multiple layers helps to assure the safety of the products in the event that one layer fails.

A history of male-to-male sex is associated with an increased risk for exposure to and transmission of certain infectious diseases, including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Men who have had sex with other men represent approximately 2% of the US population, yet are the population most severely affected by HIV. In 2010, MSM accounted for at least 61% of all new HIV infections in the U.S. and an estimated 77% of diagnosed HIV infections among males were attributed to male-to-male sexual contact. Between 2008 and 2010, the estimated overall incidence of HIV was stable in the U.S. However the incidence in MSM increased 12%, while it decreased in other populations. The largest increase was a 22% increase in MSM aged 13 to 24 years. Since younger individuals are more likely to donate blood, the implications of this increase in incidence need to be further evaluated.

Is FDA's policy of excluding MSM blood donors discriminatory?

FDA's deferral policy is based on the documented increased risk of certain transfusion transmissible infections, such as HIV, associated with male-to-male sex and is not based on any judgment concerning the donor's sexual orientation.

What about men who have had a low number of partners, practice safe sex, or who are currently in monogamous relationships?

Having had a low number of partners is known to decrease the risk of HIV infection. However, to date, no donor eligibility questions have been shown to reliably identify a subset of MSM (e.g., based on monogamy or safe sexual practices) who do not still have a substantially increased rate of HIV infection compared to the general population or currently accepted blood donors. In the future, improved questionnaires may be helpful to better select safe donors, but this cannot be assumed without evidence.

Are there other donors who have increased risks of HIV or other infections who, as a result, are also excluded from donating blood?

Intravenous drug abusers are excluded from giving blood because they have prevalence rates of HIV, HBV, HCV and HTLV that are much higher than the general population. People who have received transplants of animal tissue or organs are excluded from giving blood because of the still largely unknown risks of transmitting unknown or emerging pathogens harbored by the animal donors. People who have recently traveled to or lived abroad in certain countries may be excluded because they are at risk for transmitting agents such as malaria or variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). People who have engaged in sex in return for money or drugs are also excluded because they are at increased risk for transmitting HIV and other blood-borne infections.

Why are some people, such as heterosexuals with multiple partners, allowed to donate blood despite increased risk for transmitting HIV and hepatitis?

Current scientific data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that, as a group, men who have sex with other men are at a higher risk for transmitting infectious diseases or HIV than are individuals in other risk categories. From 2007 through 2010, among adult and adolescent males, the annual number of diagnosed HIV infections attributed to MSM increased, while the numbers of infections attributed to other risks among males decreased. Among adult and adolescent females, the annual number of diagnosed HIV infections attributed to injection drug use and heterosexual contact both decreased.

Isn't the HIV test accurate enough to identify all HIV positive blood donors?

HIV tests currently in use are highly accurate, but still cannot detect HIV 100% of the time. It is estimated that the HIV risk from a unit of blood has been reduced to about 1 per 2 million in the USA, almost exclusively from so called "window period" donations. The "window period" exists very early after infection, where even current HIV testing methods cannot detect all infections. During this time, a person is infected with HIV, but may not have enough virus or have developed sufficient antibodies to be detected by available tests. For this reason, a person could test negative, even when they are actually HIV positive and infectious. Therefore, blood donors are not only tested but are also asked questions about behaviors that increase their risk of HIV infection.

Collection of blood from persons with an increased risk of HIV infection also presents an added risk to transfusion recipients due to the possibility that blood that has already been collected and is being stored in a blood bank may be accidentally given to a patient in error either before testing is completed or following a positive test. Such medical errors occur extremely rarely, but given that there are about 17 million Whole Blood and red blood cell donations collected each year in the USA, they can occur.

How long has FDA had this MSM policy?

FDA's policies on donor deferral for history of male sex with males date back to 1983, when the risk of AIDS from transfusion was first recognized. FDA's current policy has been in place since 1992.

FDA modified its blood donor policy as new scientific data and more accurate tests for HIV and hepatitis became available. Today, the risk of getting HIV from a blood transfusion has been reduced to about one per two million units of blood transfused. The risk of hepatitis C is about the same as for HIV, while the risk of hepatitis B is somewhat higher.

Doesn't the policy eliminate healthy donors at a time when more donors are needed because of blood shortages?

FDA realizes that this policy leads to deferral of many healthy donors. However, FDA's MSM policy minimizes even the small risk of getting infectious diseases such as HIV or hepatitis through a blood transfusion. Due to the generosity of millions of eligible donors, the blood supply in the US has been very stable.

Would FDA ever consider changing the policy?

FDA's primary responsibility is to enhance blood safety and protect blood recipients. Therefore FDA would change this policy only if supported by scientific data showing that a change in policy would not present a significant and preventable risk to blood recipients. Although scientific evidence has not yet demonstrated that blood donated by MSM or a subgroup of these potential donors does not have a substantially increased rate of HIV infection compared to currently accepted blood donors, FDA remains willing to consider new approaches to donor screening and testing. If those approaches can assure that blood recipients are not placed at an increased risk of HIV or other transfusion transmitted diseases, FDA will consider a change to its current policy.

The Health and Human Service's Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) met to discuss the FDA MSM deferral policy on June 10-11, 2010. During that meeting, the ACBSA heard presentations and engaged in deliberations on the current MSM deferral policy. The Committee was asked to determine if there were sufficient data to support a change in policy at this time, or, if needed, to identify areas of further study that would establish a sound scientific basis for a change in policy. The committee found the current donor deferral policies to be suboptimal in permitting some potentially high risk donations while preventing some potentially low risk donations, but voted in favor of retaining the existing policy, and identified areas requiring further research.

In response to the ACBSA recommendations, HHS is in the process of conducting additional studies that aim to address the following questions:

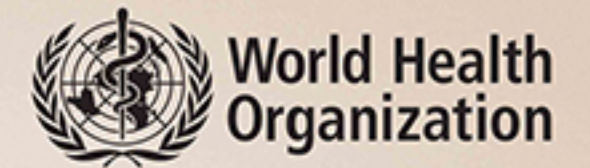
- a) How does the risk of blood transmissible diseases in the current donor population related to risk factors in donors?
- b) What is the root cause of the Quarantine Release Errors, the accidental release of blood not cleared for use that occur at blood collection centers and potentially put the blood supply at risk, and what mitigations can be considered?
- c) Do potential blood donors correctly understand and properly interpret the current standard questionnaire used to obtain donor history? What motivates men with MSM behavioral history to donate blood and would MSM be likely to comply with modified deferral criteria?
- d) Would an alternative screening strategy for MSM (and potentially other high-risk donors) assure blood safety?

When the results and data from the studies are available and potential policy revisions are brought forward for consideration, HHS intends to provide opportunities for discussion in a public forum.

<http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/BloodBloodProducts/QuestionsaboutBlood/ucm108186.html>

Page last updated: 5/21/2013

**Every blood donor
is a hero.**



World Blood Donor Day
Every blood donor is a hero 14 JUNE 2012



the
Williams
INSTITUTE

Naomi G. Goldberg
Gary J. Gates

JUNE 2010

Joint Statement before the Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability

Donor Deferral for Men Who Have Had Sex with Another Man (MSM)

June 15, 2010

AABB, America's Blood Centers (ABC) and the American Red Cross strongly support the use of rational, scientifically-based deferral periods that are applied fairly and consistently among blood donors who engage in similar risk activities. Therefore, since 2006 our organizations have recommended a change in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) deferral criteria for prospective male blood donors who have had sexual contact with another male (MSM).

In 2006, AABB, Red Cross and ABC presented a joint position to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Blood Products Advisory Committee (BPAC) stating our belief "that the current lifetime deferral for men who have had sex with other men is medically and scientifically unwarranted" and recommending that the deferral criteria "be modified and made comparable with criteria for other groups at increased risk for sexual transmission of transfusion-transmitted infections."

After reviewing the data and publications available since the above mentioned 2006 BPAC meeting, our organizations, which represent the blood banking and transfusion medicine community, maintain our recommendation that FDA amend the indefinite deferral currently in place for a male who has had sex with another male since 1977 to a 12-month deferral. This change in policy would conform the deferral period for MSM with the deferrals for other similar high-risk sexual behavior. For example, the current deferral period for individuals who have had sexual contact with an individual with HIV or viral hepatitis is 12 months. In each of these cases, the vast majority of donors with prevalent infections will be positive by both antibody tests and nucleic acid amplification testing (NAT). This remains true even with increased numbers of HIV-infected MSM, as recently reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The current "window period" from the time an individual is infected and the time screening tests would detect infection – approximately nine days for HIV, 7.4 days for HCV, and 30-38 days for HBV (without NAT) – falls well within a one-year deferral period.

According to a Williams Institute study:

"If the current MSM ban were completely lifted, we estimate that an additional 130,150 men would likely donate 219,200 additional pints of blood each year. If MSM who have not had sexual contact with another man in the past twelve months were permitted to donate, we estimate that 53,269 additional men are likely to donate 89,716 pints each year. If MSM who have not had sexual contact with another man in the past five years were permitted to donate, we estimate that 42,286 additional men would make 71,218 blood donations.

Conclusion

Since American Red Cross and the American Association of Blood Banks have declared that the current FDA blanket ban on blood donation by MSM is unwarranted there have been new calls to reconsider current policies. Our analyses suggest that lifting the ban could increase the total annual US blood supply by 0.6% to 1.4%. While these increases in the blood supply may seem modest, they would occur in an environment where blood supply shortages are common."

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A national think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media and the public.

Table 2:

Panel 1. Estimates of Number of Men Who May Donate Blood

	# Eligible to Donate	# Likely to Donate	# of Pints Donated
Lifting of Blood Donation Ban	2,603,004	130,150	219,200
Twelve-Month Deferral	1,065,375	53,269	89,716
Five-Year Deferral	845,714	42,286	71,218



You are here: Global Home > Explore Records > **Most blood donated - whole blood**

MOST BLOOD DONATED - WHOLE BLOOD

The most blood donated was 315 whole blood units by John W. Sheppard (USA) who made the latest donation in Florida, USA, in May 2011.

John W. Sheppard hopes that his experience might be an incentive to promote the positive aspects of blood donations by healthy individuals without any adverse affects to their health and meeting the standards of the government, national, state and international Blood associations.

FOR THE RECORD

WHO:
JOHN W. SHEPPARD

WHAT:
MOST BLOOD DONATED -
WHOLE BLOOD

WHERE:
UNITED STATES

Two men rivals in blood donation

MASSAPEQUA, N.Y., Sept. 8 (UPI) -- A Massapequa, N.Y., man and a St. Louis resident are engaged in a friendly rivalry over who can become the biggest U.S. blood donor, officials said.

Al Fischer, 75, a Massapequa print shop operator, was to reach a personal best of 40 gallons with a donation Tuesday, Newsday reported.

Maurice Wood, 83, a retired St. Louis railroad inspector, is the only other U.S. resident to have given more blood, New York Blood Center officials said.

"He's about six or seven pints ahead of me," Fischer said of Wood.

Fischer has donated blood several times a year, every year, since 1951, when he was 17 and made his first donation in a Baptist church in Union, S.C. Fischer even has a vanity license plate -- "O BLOOD" -- to encourage others to give blood.

"He's a one-man army, who has helped almost a thousand people," said Harvey Schaffler, executive director of Long Island Blood Services.

Executive Healthcare Management

www.executivehm.com



American Blood



10 pints
average amount
of blood in human body

320 pints
total amount of blood
donated by Al Fischer

3 in 100 Americans donate blood



1 pint saves **3 lives**



Donated whole blood may be transfused to a patient as is, or it may be broken down into its transfusable components - red blood cells, platelets, and plasma. Each component can be used to help save a different patient's life. That's up to three patients who can benefit from a single blood donation.

15m pints donated annually



American Red Cross blood supply
is **48 hours** from being empty



1 person only allowed **6 pints** of blood donation within a year



Sources:
www.newsday.com
www.americanblood.org
www.guinness2.org

Man says blood center rejected him because he appeared gay

By Jerry Davich
Sun-Times Media
July 15, 2011

Aaron Pace is admittedly and noticeably effeminate, but he says he's not homosexual.

Still, his looks, character and behavior prompted a blood donation center to reject him when he tried to donate blood recently and he's miffed, to say the least.

"I was humiliated and embarrassed," said Pace, 22, of Gary. "It's not right that homeless people can give blood but homosexuals can't. And I'm not even a homosexual."

Pace visited Bio-Blood Components Inc. in Gary, which pays for blood and plasma donations, up to \$40 a visit. But during the interview screening process, Pace said he was told he could not be a blood donor there because he "appears to be a homosexual."

No one at Bio-Blood returned calls seeking comment, but donation centers like it, and even the American Red Cross, are still citing a nearly 30-year-old federal policy to turn away gay men from donating.

The Food and Drug Administration policy, implemented in 1983, states that men who have had sex — even once — with another man (since 1977) are not allowed to donate blood.

The policy was sparked by concerns that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was tainting the blood supply. And, back then, screening tests to identify HIV-positive blood had not yet been developed.

Today, all donated blood is tested for HIV, as well as for hepatitis B and C, syphilis and other infectious diseases, before it can be released to hospitals. This is why gay activists, blood centers including the American Red Cross, and even some lawmakers now claim the lifetime ban is "medically and scientifically unwarranted."

"It is unfair, outrageous and just plain stupid," said Curt Ellis, former director of The Aliveness Project of Northwest Indiana, an agency that's been educating the public about HIV-related issues for many years.

"The policy is based on the stigma associated with HIV that existed early on," Ellis said. "It seems like some stigmas will just never die."

The Indiana State Department of Health doesn't have a policy regarding the collection of blood and its criteria. "Nor do we advise blood donation centers on their individual policies," spokeswoman Amy Bukarica said.

But the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last year voted again not to recommend a change to the FDA's policy of a lifetime deferral for men who have sex with other men.

"The deferral of men who have had sex with other men is still in effect in Indiana and across the country — with all blood banks, not just the American Red Cross — because all blood banks must be in compliance with FDA regulations," said Karen Kelley, spokeswoman for the American Red Cross.

"We recommended that the deferral criteria be modified and made comparable with criteria for other groups at increased risk for sexual transmission of transfusion-transmitted infections," she added.

"While we are disappointed with the committee's decision, our organization is obligated by law to follow the guidelines set forth by the FDA regarding donor eligibility," Kelley said.

The American Red Cross, which supplies approximately 40 percent of the nation's blood supply, determines a potential donor's sexual history through standardized health and lifestyle questions in a private, confidential health history review, she said. This is similar to how other blood donation centers, such as Bio-Blood, screen potential

OVER A LIFETIME ONE DONOR CAN HELP MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE



NHS

Blood and Transplant

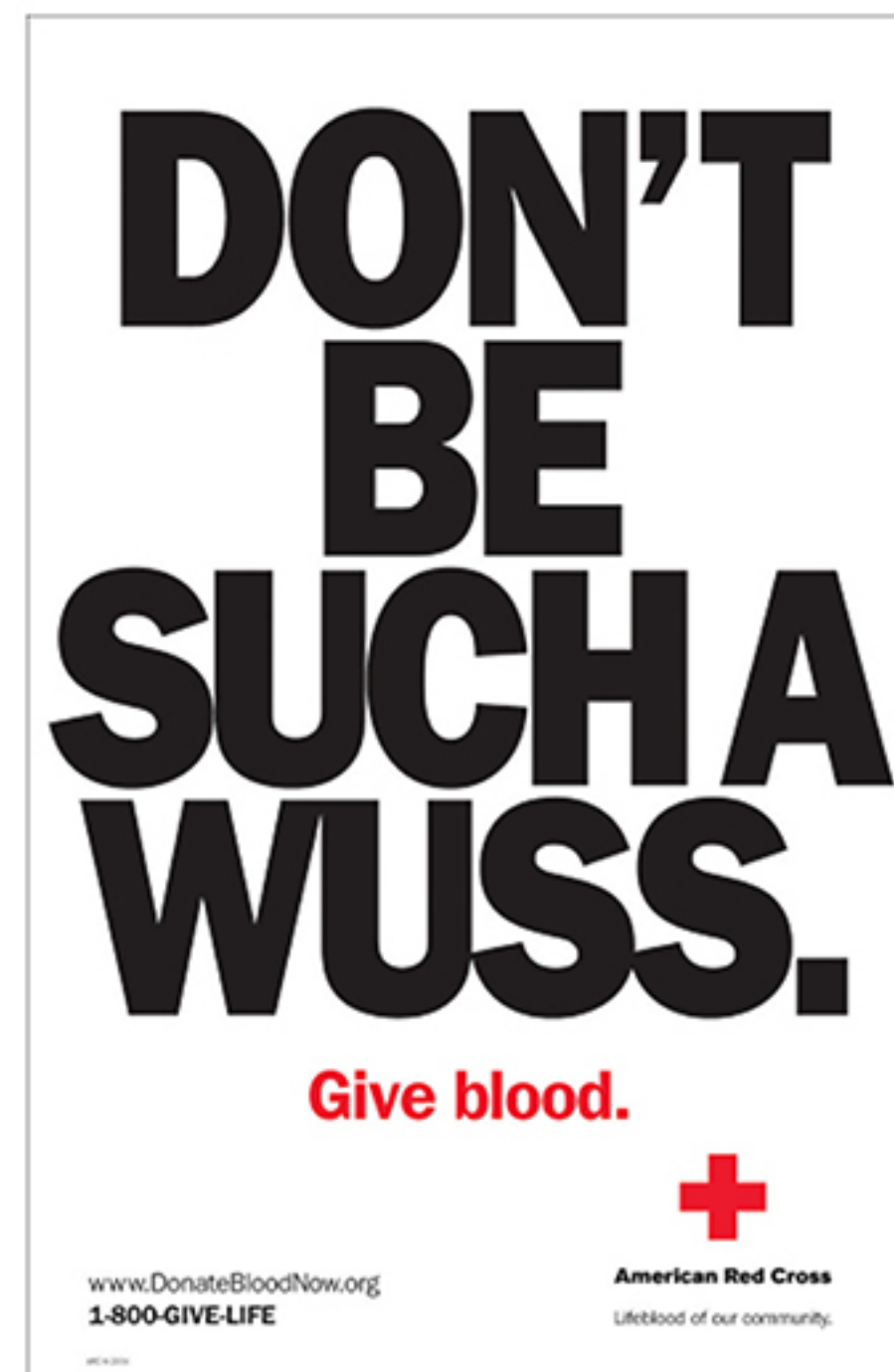
- +All types needed
- +Always give 100%, unless you are donating blood
- +Are you a blood donor?
- +Are you ready to be a hero?
- +Be a hero...save 3 lives. Just 1 pint may save up to 3 lives.
- +Be a hero, it's in your blood
- +Because it's in your blood.
- +Be a real hero.
- +Be human, give blood
- +Be someone special, be a blood donor
- +Be someone's hero. Give Blood.
- +Be nice to me I gave blood today
- +Blessed are the young who can give back life with their blood
- +Blood, a gift for life.
- +Blood saves lives. Safe blood starts with me.
- +Blood donation, gift of life
- +Blood donation, gift of love
- +Blood donation is good
- +Blood donors are life-savers
- +Blood donors are special people
- +Blood is life itself, make it available
- +Blood is meant for circulation. Donate blood.
- +Blood should circulate-donate blood without waiting for a call
- +Blood. The Fountain of Life.
- +Celebrating your gift of blood
- +Celebrating the gift of blood
- +Do something amazing today. Save a life, give blood
- +Do some good for someone else.
- +Do something special
- +Donate blood, donate love.
- +Donate blood, save life
- +Donate blood. Gift life.

- +Donate blood so others may live
- +Donate for life
- +Don't be such a wuss. Give blood.
- +Drops for you, life for them.
- +Give a gift of love. Your own blood.
- +Give a hand
- +Give Blood Give Life
- +Give blood, the ultimate renewable resource
- +Give Blood Save Lives
- +Give Hope
- +Give life.
- +Give something priceless, donate blood
- +Give the thing that cost nothing-give blood.
- +Good people give
- Have a heart, give blood today
- +Have a big heart, give blood
- +Help save a life, Give the gift of blood
- +Hero's needed
- +Hero's wanted
- +Holding out for a hero
- +I believe in donating blood
- +I give blood, will you?
- +I just gave the gift of life
- +It's in your blood to save lives
- +It's about life
- +It takes all types. Giving=Living
- +It takes all types to keep the beat going
- +I tried, have you?
- +I make a difference
- +If you donate money, you give food!
- But if you donate blood, you give life!!
- +It takes all types. Donate blood.
- +Join the Hero Club, give blood.
- +Join us.
- +Every blood donor is a hero

- +Every drop counts
- +Feel Awesome
- +Feel Brave
- +Feel Essential
- +Feel Fierce
- +Feel good
- +Feel Proud
- +Feel Shockingly Good
- +Feel Strong
- +Find the hero in you. Give blood 3 times a year.
- +Join the "vein-to-vein" chain that helps save lives
- +Make a difference
- +More blood. More life.
- +New blood for the world
- +Researchers have found: people who don't donate blood are more likely to lose their girl friends than those who do. Sometimes it isn't wrong to lie for a good cause.
- +Researchers say that 85% of people that donate blood become 71% more attractive to their partner
- +Rich or poor, you have what you need, the most precious natural resource of all
- +Rock n Roll up your sleeve
- +Roll up your sleeves and give blood
- +Save a life give blood
- +Save a life without donating any money
- +Saving the world isn't as easy. Saving a life is.
- +Share a unique gift. Give blood, give life
- +Share a little, care a little
- +Share life, Give blood
- +Spread the love, give some blood

- +Starve a vampire, donate blood
- +Together
- +Together, we can.
- +The best date you'll ever have is the date you will have with the blood mobile
- +The medical side effects of giving blood: Slight euphoria, puffed up chest and a broad smile
- +The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Give blood.
- +Together we can save a life
- +You're somebody's type
- +You can be heroes
- +You can be someone's superhero!
- +You don't have to be a doctor to save lives. Just donate blood. It's safe. It's simple. And it saves lives.
- +You have a pint to spare-you have a life to share
- +You have, you can
- +Your blood is worth bottling
- +Your donated blood helps to mend broken hearts.
- +Wanted: more life-savers
- +We need all types of blood from all types of people
- +We need each other, donate blood
- +We need you
- +We need your help!
- +We need your type
- +We need you to save a life
- +What's your type?
- +With just a drop of blood you can make a difference. Give blood saves lives
- +Would you give a few minutes to save a few lives
- +Vote for life with your blood

Collected Campaign Slogans



We the People: Your Voice

https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/allow-healthy-gay-and-bisexual-men-donate-blood/SzWQdryS

the WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

BLOG PHOTOS & VIDEO BRIEFING ROOM ISSUES the ADMINISTRATION the WHITE HOUSE our GOVERNMENT

WE the PEOPLE YOUR VOICE IN OUR GOVERNMENT

Help make We the People even better. Share your feedback on how this new platform can improve.

Share Your Feedback

Log in | Create an Account

CREATE A PETITION OPEN PETITIONS RESPONSES HOW & WHY

Thanks for your interest in We the People, a new tool on WhiteHouse.gov that allows all Americans to ask the Obama Administration to take action on a range of important issues facing our country.

The petition you are trying to access has expired, because it failed to meet the signature threshold.

While you can't sign this petition, there may be other petitions on We the People on a similar issue that you'd like to add your name to. Or, you can create your own petition.

Create a petition

Helpful Hints

Creating a duplicate or similar petition will make it harder for you to get an official response. Instead, sign and help promote the one that has already been created.

Recent Petitions

Recent Responses

History of Petitions

CREATE A PETITION

Let Gay Men Give Blood!

www.thepetitionsite.com/696/539/676/let-gay-men-give-blood/

Care2 petitionsite Care2 | petitionsite | browse petitions | start a petition | my petitionsite | help

Let Gay Men Give Blood!

Like 1.1k Tweet +1

overview petition

We the undersigned think it is time to revisit and revise the rule which prohibits gay men from donating blood.

signatures: 9,382

signature goal: 10,000

This petition is now closed.
Please take action on these important issues below.

Petition | Gay Men Should

www.change.org/petitions/gay-men-should-be-allowed-to-donate-blood

Petitioned The President of the United States

This petition was delivered to:

The President of the United States	The U.S. Senate	The U.S. House of Representatives
Your Governor	Your State Senate	Your State House
FDA Public Affairs Specialist Mary B. Yebba	FDA Public Affairs Specialist Joseph Raulinaitis	FDA Public Affairs Specialist Susan Small
FDA Public Affairs Specialist Joan G. Lytle	FDA Public Affairs Specialist Anitra D. Brown-Reed	FDA Public Affairs Specialist Stephen King
FDA Public Affairs Specialist Brenda Zimmer	FDA Public Affairs Specialist JoAnn Pittman	FDA Public Affairs Specialist Diana Monaco
FDA Public Affairs Specialist Carol Gallagher		

Gay Men Should be Allowed to Donate Blood

Petition by
Andrew Heugel
Brewster, NY

Petition Closed
with 1,415 supporters

1,415 signatures

Instead of having such a rigid approach to determining whether a potential donor should be allowed to donate blood, the health care worker should be given more discretion based on the type of sex engaged in, whether such sex was within the "window period" for detecting HIV, whether the person engaged in needle sharing and the number of partners that this person has had and what their partners' risky behaviors were, if known. The questions should be about type of sex, rather than whether it was man to man, and whether the potential donor has been tested for HIV and other STD's.

There are far more accurate and less expensive tests for detection of HIV and other STD's than there were when this law was written and these tests were used on every donor during the blood drives that I worked on. There is also a significant percentage of HIV positive people who contracted it through heterosexual sex, as no unprotected sex is risk free. Plus, there is a shortage of blood in many areas.

I ask you to introduce a bill to allow for all healthy individuals to donate blood if they have taken sufficient precautions. I feel that this would both end the discrimination that those in the Gay community have felt in this regard and would benefit the overall health of the community.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,
[Your name]

Less

FDA Ban on Gay Men as Blood Donors Opposed by American Medical Association

By Gillian Mohny
abcnews.go.com
June 20, 2013

The American Medical Association voted Tuesday to oppose a decades long ban by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which prohibits gay men from donating blood. The FDA ban originated in 1983 in response to the AIDS outbreak, when little was known about the virus and gay men were more likely to have contracted the virus.

However, now that the ban is almost 30 years old, some experts say the policy is outdated. HIV and AIDS testing has become standard practice in blood donations to minimize risk to recipients. According to the FDA's website, approximately 1 in 2 million blood transfusions results in an HIV infection.

"The lifetime ban on blood donation for men who have sex with men is discriminatory and not based on sound science," AMA board member Dr. William Kobler said in a statement. "This new policy urges a federal policy change to ensure blood donation bans or deferrals are applied to donors according to their individual level of risk and are not based on sexual orientation alone."

The AMA recommends that the FDA change its policy so that gay men are evaluated on an individual level rather than being lumped together in a high-risk category, in addition to crafting a policy that more accurately represents scientific research.

Robert Valadez, policy analyst for the HIV/AIDS advocacy group Gay Men's Health Crisis, said the ban was outdated in light of medical advances that can detect HIV in donated blood in nearly all blood donations.

"The policy was formed at a time in our history when we didn't have a name for AIDS or HIV," said Valadez. "Our technology has advanced to the point where ... it is antiquated to keep this policy in place and to keep those units of blood from entering the blood supply."

Louis Katz, the vice president for America's Blood Centers, which provides nearly half of America's blood supply, said one option for the FDA is to adopt policies similar to those used abroad. In countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, gay men are allowed to donate blood if they have abstained from sex with a man for a certain period of time.

"A year [of abstinence] has been adopted in the United Kingdom and Australia," said Katz, who stressed this would just be a first step. "We understand that it is problematic, but it would be movement from where we've been since the early 80s."

According to the FDA website, gay men represent 61 percent of all new HIV infections in the U.S.

In 2010 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created an advisory committee to discuss the policy. The Red Cross, America's Blood Centers and AABB, a non-profit representing individuals and institutions involved in the field of transfusion medicine, released a joint statement advocating to change the policy to allow men, who have had sex with men, to donate blood as long as a certain amount of time has passed since their last sexual encounter.

In 2012 HHS submitted a request for information from additional studies on the potential outcomes of changing the blood donation criteria. They are still evaluating the comments they received.