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World

WHO Finds Most Countries Fall Short of Ensuring a Safe Blood Supply

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World Blood Donor Day was June 14, 2006. To mark the occasion, the World Health Organization (WHO) released an announcement stating that the world is making slow progress towards the goal of 100%unpaid, voluntary blood donation. According to the WHO, regular, voluntary donors are desirable, as they are less likely to lie about their health status and may be more likely to keep themselves healthy. Nevertheless, many countries still fall short of ensuring the safety and the sustainability of blood supplies. Most developing countries still depend on paid donors or family members; however, some have made progress by applying stricter principles within their AIDS prevention programs.

A WHO survey showed 56 of 124 countries participating in the survey saw an increase in unpaid voluntary donation. The remaining 68 have either made no progress or have seen a decline in the number of unpaid, voluntary donors. Of the 124 countries, 49 have reached 100% unpaid voluntary blood donation. Furthermore, the number of donations per 1,000 population remains about 15 times greater in high-income than in low-income countries, despite the increased need for sustained, safe blood supplies in developing countries.

The WHO introduced the 100%unpaid, voluntary blood donation policy in 1997. World Blood Donor Day, celebrated annually on June 14, was established at the 58th World Health Assembly in May 2005 by the WHO's 192 Member States, to urge all countries in the world to thank blood donors, promote voluntary, unpaid blood donations and ensure safe supplies of blood for all.

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