



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Clinic assistant Zoya Slavkovic holds up first donations of the day at the Canada Blood Services Clinic at Hillcrest Mall in Richmond Hill Tuesday as donors relax on lounge chairs.

BLOOD: If it's in us, why won't we give?

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

It's in you to give, we're cleverly reminded by Canadian Blood Services.

Still, demand outstrips supply, central Ontario spokesperson Tami Clark said.

"We're down 40 per cent on inventory and hospital demand is 3.3 per cent higher," she said.

"We try and have a four to six-day (blood) supply. Right now, we're below the four-day optimum level."

The situation is national and worrisome.

The central Ontario division, which includes York Region, supplies 56 hospitals.

New donors aren't being recruited at a rate to meet demand, no-shows and cancellations are up and the demographic comprising regular donors is dwindling.

Indifference isn't as big an issue as is resistance, Ms Clark said.

"I don't think it's apathy," she said.

Still, there are several factors that are keeping people from donating the "gift of life," she admits, adding the organization will ramp up its efforts to engage younger people to donate blood.

"We have a dedicated donor base that's not being replaced. People do think the other person will do it. One in two people are eligible to give, but only one in 60 gave last year."

New, squeamish donors may hold off because of the procedure.

"It's a phobia for some," Ms Clark said.

"It's a two-second pinch and the arm is covered. You don't have to look. No one really likes the needle, but sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone."

The 2007-08 fiscal year held both challenges and rewards for Canadian Blood Services, according to the organization's

recent annual report to Canadians, entitled *Transforming the Blood System*.

"Change is never easy, but for Canadian Blood Services, it has been rewarding," states the report.

"This year, we faced a number of challenges while also delivering on a number of strategic directives."

The service has always been ready to roll up its sleeves as a means to encourage the public to do the same. Savvy marketers of its important message, its campaign includes traditional and new tactics.

"During times of urgent need, we offer extended hours at clinics and more mobile clinics," she said.

Younger donors, 17 and up, are being courted.

"They're very important," Ms Clark said.

"We have high school clinics and we talk to students."

A Partners for Life program encourages people to make a habit of donating together. The service also promotes organizations to donate as a group. The number of clinics are also on the rise.

The service is also looking to humanize the act of donating blood.

"It's a very personal donation," she said.

"But it's a faceless donation if you don't know where it's going."

Accordingly, the marketing of late has been branding the real-life benefits and beneficiaries of your vital fluid.

A website, www.thankyourdonor.ca, makes that possible.

"It lets you see where your blood went and how it was used," she said. "It shows that when you donate, you really are saving a life."

Where the service draws the line is blood money.

"Hospitals don't pay for blood," Ms Clark said.

"No one in Canada does. We

polled our donors in the past.

"They said the value is in giving of yourself. They didn't want a reward or money attached."

In the United States, some private clinics will pay donors for the plasma component, not whole blood.

Blood and blood components are used to treat a number of injuries and illnesses, including various forms of cancer, hip and joint surgery, transplants, trauma patients, such as car accident victims, patients with blood disorders and many others. One trauma patient may need 50 units of blood.

After a donor has given blood, the whole blood donation is divided into three main components, red blood cells, plasma and platelets. The individual components are used to treat many different medical conditions.

For example, platelets are used extensively in the treatment of certain cancers.

This is why one donation has the potential to save three lives.

Canadian Blood Services is a national, non-profit charitable organization that manages the supply of blood and blood products in all provinces and territories outside of Quebec.

The organization, with an annual operating budget of \$900 million, also oversees the OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network, and provides national leadership for organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

More than 4,000 staff and 17,000 volunteers operate 41 permanent collection sites and more than 19,000 donor clinics annually.

The provincial and territorial ministries of health provide operational funding.

The federal government, through Health Canada, is responsible for regulating the blood system.

WHERE TO GIVE

► **Nov. 14** - Latham Hall in Stouffville from 1:30 to 7:30 p.m. To make an appointment, call 1-888-2-DONATE.

HERE'S HOW TO DONATE:

► You need ID with full name and signature, or full name and photograph.

► Be between 17 and 71

► Weigh at least 50 kg (110 lb)

► Be in general good health and feeling well. You should have had something to eat and adequate sleep. You must also meet hemoglobin (iron) requirements (test done at clinic).

► At the time of donation, you will be asked a number of questions to determine your eligibility.

For example, if you have had dental treatment, extractions, fillings, cleaning, restoration, root canal or dental surgery you need to wait 72 hours provided there is full recovery. The same applies if you have a cold, flu or sore throat or had ear or body piercing or tattooing.

► For information and to find local clinics, visit www.blood.ca or call 1-888-236-6283.

► To see how people's lives have been saved and changed, visit www.thankyourdonor.ca

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on York Regional Police by
SUPT. ROBERTSON ROUSE
5 District Commander

ALL WELCOME
- Refreshments -