

Growing numbers call for change to blood donation policy for MSM

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Activists across the country participated in a National Gay Blood Drive last week, calling attention to a decades-old policy that requires a lifetime deferral of blood donation by men who have sex with men (MSM). AMA policy strongly supports eliminating such public policies, calling instead for scientifically based deferral periods that are consistently applied to donors based on their risk levels.

Following are two of these AMA policies, affirmed at the 2013 AMA Annual Meeting.

H-50.973 Blood donor deferral criteria

Our AMA: (1) supports the use of rational, scientifically based blood and tissue donation deferral periods that are fairly and consistently applied to donors according to their level of risk; and (2) opposes the current lifetime deferral on blood and tissue donations from MSM.

H-50.975 Safety of blood donations and transfusions

Our AMA: (1) Supports working with blood banking organizations to educate prospective donors about the safety of blood donation and blood transfusion; (2) supports the use of its publications to help physicians inform patients that donating blood does not expose the donor to the risk of HIV/AIDS; (3) encourages physicians to inform high-risk patients of the value of self-deferral from blood and blood product donations; and (4) supports providing educational information to physicians on alternatives to transfusion.

Learn how the AMA is engaged in similar issues through the AMA Advisory Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues.