

Donor Eligibility: MSM and Other Lifestyles

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Objectives

- Brief history
- Stakeholder engagement
- Evolving donor eligibility policy for men who have sex with men (MSM)

History

In 1988, in response to the AIDS pandemic the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) implemented an indefinite deferral in place for men who had sex with men (MSM), even once, since 1977.

When Canadian Blood Services (CBS) and Héma-Québec (HQ) assumed responsibility for the Canadian blood system in 1998, the policy remained unchanged

History

- CBS has been consulting with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) and patient advocacy groups regarding the MSM policy for almost a decade
- This consultation process was temporarily suspended as the policy was being legally challenged against the Canadian Charter of Rights
- Engagement with key stakeholders resumed following this case and is ongoing

History

- On September 8, 2010 Ontario Superior Court Justice Aitken ruled:
 - Blood donation is a gift, not a right
 - There is no requirement under law to accept the gift of blood
 - Donors have a duty to answer questions honestly
 - MSM deferral is not discriminatory, but is based on health and safety considerations

History

- However she went on to say that the need for ‘lifetime’ deferral period was not demonstrated:

“Both blood recipients and gay/bisexual men are vulnerable groups in Canadian society. The MSM deferral policy has the capacity to impact on the level of fear or anxiety understandably experienced by both groups.”

Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholders that were identified included:

- general public (which included active donors),
- patient advocates
- LGBTQ advocates

First Policy Change

Step 1: In 2010, CBS Board directed consultations to inform a recommendation to Health Canada for “no less than 5 years and no more than 10 years”

Step 2: Produced detailed report, reviewed by expert panel, to inform consultation (shared with stakeholders)

Step 3: Surveyed general public and donor groups via Ipsos Reid

Step 4: Consulted with affected groups

Step 5: Presented submission to Health Canada with recommendation

Step 6: Approved and “new” 5 year deferral for MSM was nationally implemented (including Quebec) on July 22, 2013

Moving Forward

- Post implementation data was collected to determine if this change had an impact to the safety of the blood supply
- The data indicated the 5 year deferral did not introduce any additional risk to the blood supply

Current Policy Change

Several “interactive points” of stakeholder engagement undertaken to submit proposed 1 year deferral



General Public

- Overall neutral or unaware
- However, a small but vocal minority see this as more of a social justice issue and will take to social media to seek gender-neutral, behaviour-based screening
- Are frequently not willing to seek out information once they have predetermined that policy is purely based on homophobia
- Unaware of limitations (or strengths) of regulatory environment

Patient Groups

- Overall support for reduction in time-based deferral for MSM
- Cautiously optimistic that the policy change will still protect against unknown, or emerging pathogens
- Support for any further incremental change would require new evidence
- Patient groups not directly impacted by this policy hesitant to engage
- Most were willing to write letter(s) of support

LGBTQ Groups

- Overall support for reduction in time-based deferral for MSM to one year but did not feel it went far enough
- Continue to seek gender-neutral, behaviour-based screening
- Support for any further incremental change would require change that allows for safe subset to donate
- Willing to assist with required research
- Most willing to write letter of support
- Continue to see policy as discriminatory
- Often wish to argue interpretation of epidemiological statistics for risk categories

PHAC Stats 2011-2014

6 | SUMMARY: ESTIMATES OF HIV INCIDENCE, PREVALENCE AND PROPORTION UNDIAGNOSED IN CANADA, 2014

Table 1. HIV incidence: Estimated number of new HIV infections and associated ranges of uncertainty in Canada in 2014 and 2011, by exposure category, sex and ethnicity/origin.

Category	2014			2011		
	Point estimate	Range*	Percentage	Point estimate	Range*	Percentage
HIV exposure category						
MSM	1,396	990-1,800	54.3%	1,416	1,030-1,800	50.6%
MSM-IDU	65	40-90	2.5%	73	50-100	2.6%
IDU	270	180-360	10.5%	384	270-500	13.7%
Heterosexual/ non-endemic	481	330-630	18.7%	531	380-680	19.0%
Heterosexual/ endemic	358	250-470	13.9%	396	280-510	14.1%
Others	<20			<20		



Proposed Trans* Donor Criteria

Individuals who self-identify as different from their birth sex

- Individuals who have not had gender affirming surgery -screen as per birth sex
- Individuals who have had gender affirming surgery over 12 months ago - screen in new sex
- Individuals who have had gender affirming surgery less than 12 months ago -defer temporarily, until 12 months after their surgery

Rationale for Criteria – Trans* Donors

- regulation requires individuals who have not had genital reassignment surgery to be screened as per birth sex
- If policy changes, the maximum deferral period related to a sexual partner risk will be 12 months
- a 12 month deferral from time of surgery is simple to apply, standardize, and explain to potential donors
- asking questions about sexual partners pre and post surgery is complicated, difficult to implement for staff, and could lead to inconsistent approaches

Moving Forward

CBS Funding opportunity (launched March 2008)

- Partnership with Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)
- \$500,000

<https://www.blood.ca/en/about-us/research-funding>

Three areas of research:

1. Donor deferral strategies and the risk of blood-borne diseases
2. Policy development and social aspects of blood system risk
3. Emerging pathogens in specific populations

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The logo for the Vancouver 2016 event, featuring the word "Vancouver" in a large, red, serif font, with "2016" in a smaller, red, sans-serif font to its right. The background of the entire slide is a scenic view of the Vancouver city skyline and harbor, with mountains in the distance.

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Questions





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