

## Facts on Blood Transfusion

The World Health Organization has published on the 14th of June 2008 ten facts about blood transfusion, I have chosen four to be published in this month's newsletter.

### **Fact 1**

Blood transfusion saves lives and improves health, but millions of patients requiring transfusion do not have timely access to safe blood. Every country needs to ensure that blood supplies are sufficient and free from HIV, hepatitis viruses and other chronic infections that can be transmitted through unsafe transfusion.

### **Fact 2**

More than 5 million people die from violence and injury every year. Road traffic crashes are the second leading cause of death and a major cause of serious injury in people aged 5 to 29 years. Safe blood transfusion is an essential part of emergency trauma care systems to minimize death and disability of injured patients.

### **Fact 3**

Blood for transfusion should always be screened for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis, but in 31 countries (out of 133 countries reporting in 2006) not all donated blood is tested for these infections. Testing is not reliable in many countries because of staff shortages, poor quality test kits, irregular supplies, or lack of basic laboratory quality. It is also not affordable or cost-effective in most developing and transitional countries.

### **Fact 4**

More than 529 000 women die every year during pregnancy or childbirth, 99% of them in developing countries. Hemorrhage leading to blood loss is the main cause of maternal deaths worldwide, accounting for up to 44% of maternal deaths in some areas of sub-Saharan Africa.