

Status of Blood Donation in Nepal



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The old saying goes, “Blood donation is life donation.” this still holds even in this twenty-first century. We have been able to mark our territory to Mars and make AI to enhance our life decisions, but we still haven’t found a substitute for blood donation. My name is Dr. Prava Basnet, and I am a graduate of Hebei Medical University, Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China. In addition, I am pleased to introduce Dr. Kunjan Khanal, a graduate of Jalalabad Ragib Rabeya Medical College, Pathantula, Sylhet, Bangladesh and an advocate for positive change in medicine. Together, we consider ourselves fortunate to share brief blood donation status in our home country, Nepal.

According to the report of a pilot online web training series conducted by WHO in 2021, Dr. Manita Rajkarnikar, Director of Nepal Red Cross Society, reported that Nepal has 80% voluntary blood donors and 40% repeat donors. Voluntary/Regular Donors donate blood voluntarily and regularly, often on a scheduled basis or whenever needed. They are committed to donating blood to help maintain a steady supply for needy patients. The repeat blood donation rate in Nepal has been relatively low. Many donations come from replacement donors, primarily family members or friends of the needy patient. She mentions the significant challenges to blood donation are the need for more defined financial support for blood transfusion programs, trained human resources, and commitment/motivation towards voluntary blood donors.

In the same report, the sustainable goal in the journey towards 100% voluntary blood donation discussion panel highlighted a few challenges faced by voluntary blood donation in Nepal. One was the lack of incorporation of blood donation programs in school/college curricula. Secondly, there was no provision for blood donation drives at parent-teacher meetings. Thirdly, there was no provision for leave or reimbursement of travel expenses for donors. As a result, number of donors are decreasing day by day. One of the most significant examples of a blood shortage was seen during the dengue outbreak in Nepal. Dengue is an arboviral infection with diverse clinical manifestations ranging from asymptomatic to severe dengue hemorrhagic fever. Although fluid transfusion is considered the mainstream, it has been found that prompt blood transfusion can prevent death from dengue. According to

WHO, Bagmati province, the second-most populous area, has reported the highest number of cases (78.2%) and deaths (68.4%). Of many factors, one reason for the high death rate was the lack of blood transfusion.

On the bright side, Prem Sagar Karmacharya, founder of Nepal Voluntary Blood Donor's Society, also 170 times blood donor himself, believes in effective methods to increase the number of blood donors in the coming days. He strongly believes in advocating the reduction of the number of days between two blood donations. "The minimum required gap currently is three months. However, new research has concluded that it can be 56 days. So, we are pushing for that too to have more readily available donors here." He also believes that integrating technology where donors can track the excellent use of their blood might motivate them to repeat donors but, of course, by ensuring the privacy of donor and patient. Additionally, he reinforced, "Donating blood is an act of solidarity. Join the effort and save lives" A theme of World Blood Donor's Day should be taught in every school and college along with the conduction of parents and teachers meeting to eradicate taboos of blood donation.

While progress has been made, Nepal continues to face challenges maintaining an adequate and safe blood supply. Conducting extensive awareness campaigns using modern technology can be fruitful in reaching a broad audience, especially in rural areas, with good collaboration between government and non-government organizations. In addition, investing in developing blood collection centers, storage facilities, and blood banks could be effective. Mobile blood donation units and blood donation drives in schools, colleges, and local communities can make donating blood easier. Providing financial incentives and benefits for voluntary blood donors, such as tax breaks or priority access to healthcare services and strengthening the regulatory framework to ensure compliance with safety standards and ethical practices can increase the number of blood donors. In Nepalese society, dispelling myths and misconceptions associated with blood donation through targeted awareness campaigns can be conducted to clear taboos regarding blood transfusion. By implementing these strategies and adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, Nepal can overcome the challenges of blood donation and establish a sustainable and reliable blood supply system for its population.

As the legend says, "You don't have to be a doctor to save lives. It's in your blood." Every one of us is capable of donating blood. Ironically, there are more health benefits of blood transfusion. Screening before blood donation has miraculously saved many lives, especially from a complication caused by high blood pressure. There are numerous scientifically proven pros of blood donation in our physical health. Likewise, the very thought of saving someone's life gives eternal bliss and satisfaction in our own life. At last, we would like to quote a slogan of world blood donation Day, "A struggling life needs nothing from you but a bottle of blood. Donate blood, spread love."