

F33 Science Not Stigma: Ending the Blood Ban

In light of the Government announcement on Thursday 8th September, the Federal Conference Committee has accepted an emergency drafting amendment from the movers, so the text of the motion therefore now reads:

Conference notes that:

- a) Men who have had sex with men (MSM), even with a condom, are currently banned from donating blood in the UK for life. On 7th November 2011, this will change to a 12-month deferral period.
- b) Women who have sex with MSM individuals are currently prevented from giving blood for 12 months, effectively excluding long-term partners of men who have had sex with a man only once in their lifetime from donating.
- c) The UK currently suffers from low levels of blood stock, particularly for certain blood types.
- d) Heterosexual men and women who have had unprotected sex in a high-risk HIV country can give blood after one year.
- e) Nick Clegg and David Cameron both made comments prior to the election that the MSM blood ban should end.
- f) Blood donations are not all individually screened for HIV, unlike in other developed countries.

Conference believes that:

1. The safety and well-being of those who require blood transfusions should always be paramount.
2. There is currently a high demand for certain blood types and the situation of low blood stock could be exacerbated by any future epidemics or pandemics, having catastrophic consequences for those who require blood transfusions.
3. The restrictions placed on the MSM group are inconsistent with the restrictions placed on other 'high risk' groups.
4. The criteria for being eligible to give blood should be based on the risk posed by the behaviour of the individual, not their membership of a certain societal grouping.
5. Removing the outright ban will give way to between one and two million new donors, based on statistics suggesting that around 6% to 10% of the male population are gay or bisexual.
6. Each individual blood donation should be subject to the most sensitive forms of screening available to ensure risk of transfusion-transmitted infections are absolutely minimal.
7. A deferral on the MSM group is not sufficient in terms of increasing the number of donors, nor does it recognise or deal with the risk posed by the behaviour of each individual, regardless of sexual orientation.
8. The outright ban on men who have sex with other men from donating blood in the UK should be removed.

Conference welcomes the recently announced lifting of the lifetime MSM blood ban, but expresses dismay that this does not go far enough to ensuring that both the blood bank is safe whilst allowing active MSM to donate blood responsibly.

Conference calls for blood donations to be subject to the most thorough and advanced screening available to ensure minimal risk of transfusion-transmitted infections.

Conference resolves to urge the government to end the outright ban on the MSM group from donating blood without introducing a deferral period; to end the twelve month deferral on female partners of that group; and subsequently to work with medical experts and organisations to ensure adequate criteria and restrictions are put in place that reflect the risk posed by the behaviour of each individual.

Background Briefing

This motion creates new policy.