

Blood ties -- younger generation more willing to donate blood

October 13 2009

Youth may not bring wisdom but, according to a new study from Canada, it does bring generosity as young adults are found to be the most likely to donate blood. The research, published in BioMed Central's open access *International Journal of Health Geographics*, looked at what factors had an impact on donating blood.

'Like other countries, Canada's population is aging, and the implications of this demographic change need to be better understood from the perspective of [blood](#) supply' says Antonio Páez who carried out the research with a team from McMaster University, Canada. Thus, while younger people are more likely to donate, they are also a declining share of Canada's population. The research, supported by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada Blood Services, and Environics Analytics, is prompted by the importance of creating a sustained and reliable donor base. Currently, despite the fact that almost everyone will need to use donor blood at some point in their life, less than 4% of eligible donors give blood.

By examining the records from the Canadian Blood Services, several patterns were observed. Firstly, the 15-24 age group showed the strongest likelihood to be donors, whilst those of working age (25-54) were the least likely to be donors. The authors predict that due to an ageing population this reliance on the younger generation will be unsustainable.

The study also showed positive ties between level of education and

ability to speak English with donation likelihood, whilst immigrants and the wealthy were less likely to donate. The paper shows that those living in a big city were much less likely to donate blood than those living in smaller cities or towns, coining the phrase "the stingy big-city effect". According to Páez, "The fact that those who possessed a higher level of education were more likely to donate lends weight to the assertion that, with 25% of Canadians thinking there are some risks in donating blood, educating the public would help expand the donor database".

"Blood products are an essential component of modern medicine and necessary to support many life-saving and life-prolonging procedures," states Páez, who concludes "To achieve the target levels of donations, there need to be targeted campaigns designed to encourage a greater number of Canadians to consider blood donation".

More information: Geographical variations in the correlates of blood donor turnout rates: an investigation of Canadian metropolitan areas, Pj Saberton, Antonio Paez, K. Bruce Newbold and Nancy M Heddle, *International Journal of Health Geographics* (in press), www.ij-healthgeographics.com/content/8/1/56

Source: BioMed Central ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Blood ties -- younger generation more willing to donate blood (2009, October 13) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-10-blood-ties-younger-donate.html>

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