

No uptake of grant relating to ban on blood donations by gay and bisexual men

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Canadian researchers may be biased since a half-million dollar research grant to possibly change the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood has not been accessed, states a Salon article in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

"As to why researchers did not proceed in their normal fashion, which is to fiercely compete for any relevant funding opportunity, remains unknown," write Jason Behrmann and Vardit Ravitsky, University of Montreal. "However, a clue may lie in the fact that this grant aims to support clinical research necessary to justify relaxing the current — hotly contested — ban on gay and [bisexual men](#) as eligible [blood donors](#)."

Current policies do not allow men who have had sex with men from 1977 to the present to donate blood.

"It's time to prove the claim that members of the gay and bisexual community can become eligible blood donors without increasing risks of transfusion-transmitted infections to the public," write the authors. "Using the funding on offer is the first step in this process."

The authors state that new screening methods allow early detection of HIV and hepatitis B and C which can protect the blood supply from infection.

"This case also provides an illuminating example as to why it is

necessary for Canadian guidelines regarding ethical conduct for research involving humans to continue to foster fairness and equity in research," they write. "The guidelines emphasize the principle of justice and the obligation of appropriate inclusion of vulnerable and typically excluded groups in research. Ignoring a grant that encourages the inclusion of sexual minorities in clinical research therefore runs contrary to national standards of scientific excellence."

"While this research may be complex and may pose particular methodologic challenges, the research community should face these challenges, and funding agencies should facilitate the uptake of this opportunity by addressing the needs of researchers. Both researchers and funders should demonstrate social responsibility since this research will have important societal implications and will promote justice and fairness in establishing an evidence-based foundation for blood donation policies," conclude the authors.

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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