

THE THIN RED LINE

By Mrs. Leila Sharma*

ALL MANKIND is bound together by a thin red line and the blood group of each individual has an inherited characteristic. Even with the advancement of medical sciences, it has not been possible to produce a substitute for the wholesome human blood. Thus the only source for the life saving fluid is man himself. The human bondage leaves the responsibility on the man to donate this life saving fluid to save the life of a fellow being in need without harming himself.

In the absence of voluntary blood donors in sufficient number hospitals, in many cases, have no option but to "purchase" blood from professional blood donors. Since the demand of blood as a life-saving fluid is ever increasing, some sections of the population tend to commercialise the blood supply by selling their blood. In this process unhealthy blood from emaciated, under-nourished and disease-carrying professional donors come into circulation which does more harm than good.

The theme for the Red Cross Day on May 8 this year, GIVE BLOOD. SAVE LIFE, has been chosen by the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva in order to emphasize the importance of blood donation and to discourage the trading practice in human blood. The Trained Nurses Association of India has adopted the same theme for the Nurses Week this year in order to emphasize the role of nurses in blood donation activities of the country.

Available statistics show that of the estimated three lakh people who give blood only five per cent are voluntary donors. Yet this meets only one fifth of the country's requirement of blood. In order to build up sufficient blood reserve to meet the requirement, at least 10 per cent of the population should donate blood at least once in their life time.

*Asst. Director (Nursing), Indian Red Cross Society, New Delhi.

The Indian Red Cross Blood Bank undertakes the task of propagating the need for voluntary blood donation and also supplies blood free of charge to needy patients. The pool is maintained by voluntary donors and blood transfusion is arranged after taking proper precautionary measures.

Nurses' Role

Nurses are largely responsible for educating and motivating the public in giving blood voluntarily for the blood donation programme.

A donor is generally an inexperienced person and approaches the process of giving blood with some trepidation. It is important that he should be reassured and made comfortable before, during and after the procedure. He should be made to feel important for his willingness to assist in the recovery of a patient and for his thoughtfulness. The antecubital fossa, the site generally chosen should be cleaned with antiseptic solution designated by the particular institution.

Nurses are responsible for the proper upkeep of the venipuncture equipment. When the desired amount of blood, about 250 cc is withdrawn the tourniquet is loosened and the donor's hand relaxed, a bandage is placed on the injecting site and the needle quickly withdrawn. He is asked to lie in the supine position for about 15-20 minutes. After a short rest the donor is allowed to sit up cautiously and then stand. The attending nurse should be alert for symptoms of vasomotor disturbance and if she sees any such indication the donor should again be made to lie down. When he is able to walk he should be given fluids and light refreshments.

RH Factor

An Rh negative person transfused with Rh positive blood may develop antibodies against the donor's blood so that if another

transfusion with Rh positive blood is given the reaction may be severe, even fatal. In order to safeguard the life of an Rh negative person the Indian Red Cross Blood Bank endeavours to maintain a list of donors having this rare Rh negative group and who are ready to donate blood at short notice to save a life.

Blood Derivatives

It is generally recognised that when blood is needed there is no substitute for the whole blood. For this reason the term "blood substitute" has been generally discontinued. Plasma, formerly known as blood substitute, is now called a blood derivative. About one million units of blood derivatives are needed. The value of plasma in an emergency treatment of shock is well recognized although it has its limitations as a substitute for blood in hemorrhagic shock. A serious complication in the use of pooled plasma is serum hepatitis. The Indian Red Cross Blood Bank, however, is using a device which detects the presence of Australian Antigen in blood samples by counter Immuno electrophoreses and micro outchertlony technique which prevents the transfer of serum hepatitis in blood transfusion.

The need for blood and blood derivatives is growing; so is the study of advanced medical sciences. And for all these blood is needed. Therefore, motivation of donors is vital for procuring blood, both for the patient and for research work.

