

June 26, 1983

GROUPS SETTING UP OWN BLOOD BANKS

By MICHAEL WINERIP, SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

When some members of the Roslyn Country Club Civic Association expressed the concern that they might contract AIDS if they received blood from a blood bank, the association set up its own list of potential blood donors.

More than 100 members of the 705-member association signed up for the program. "We got a lot of people who said it was a great idea," said Saul Maslow, an association leader. "Percentage-wise, I'm surprised we got the response we did."

Under the setup, any member facing surgery can call a neighbor with the same blood type and ask that person to donate blood. But blood-bank officials in the New York metropolitan area have expressed concern about the impact of groups like the Roslyn association, which work outside the usual blood supply networks. 'Blood Banks Would Be Destroyed'

"If people started to set up separate pools like Roslyn, we'd see little pockets of donors and eventually the blood banks would be destroyed," said Martin Lowy, administrative director of the Greater New York Blood Program, which serves 262 hospitals in metropolitan New York and New Jersey.

"There are more groups like Roslyn out there in the area," he said. "I've heard of them." The three major blood associations in the country - the American Red Cross, the Council of Community Blood Centers and the American Association of Blood Banks - issued a statement emphasizing the vital role blood banks play.

And many local hospitals, such as Yale-New Haven Hospital, are refusing to honor requests by people who want to designate their own blood donors. "We do not permit it," said Dr. Joseph Bove, a staff member at the hospital. "It's not done in any hospital in Connecticut." Little Risk in Transfusions

Dr. Bove, along with representatives of all the other blood banks in the area, said that the chance of contracting AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, through a transfusion was extremely remote. It is believed to be spread through sex or injections with contaminated needles. The risk for a person in need of blood going without a transfusion far outweighs any possible health risk from accepting blood, he said.

Requests for designated blood donors have been a particular concern for blood banks in metropolitan New York, which has seen a major outbreak of AIDS. The illness, for which there is no known cure, breaks down an individual's immunological system, leading to other physical problems.

Medical reports in recent months have questioned the possible role blood transfusions may play in transmitting AIDS. As a result, the number of calls from metropolitan New York residents wanting to give their blood to relatives and friends has grown, officials said.

Dr. Harvey Einhorn, director of the North Jersey Blood Center in East Orange, and Dr. Bove said they had both noticed the trend. Fear of Donors Increasing

"In my 25 years here I might have had one or two calls from people who wanted to pick out their donors," said Dr. Bove, who is also chairman of the transfusion-transmitted disease committee of the American Association of Blood Banks. "In the last months, we're getting three or four calls a day."

The same thing is happening in other parts of the country, too. A church group in Houston approached its local blood bank to limit donations to members of the congregation. A labor union in Orlando, Fla., canceled a regular visit by the regional bloodmobile because members wanted to keep their blood for their own people.

The New York Blood Program has tried to discourage such callers. Leaders of the Roslyn group were invited to the blood program's Long Island center in Melville to see firsthand the precautions taken in collecting blood.

Staff members stressed to the Roslyn visitors that no one is paid to give blood to the center, so that anyone coming into the blood bank is doing so for altruistic reasons. High-Risk Donor Screened

Prospective donors are given a questionnaire that asks if they belong to any of the high-risk groups for AIDS -homosexual men, Haitians, intravenous drug users or mates of bisexual men. If so, they are asked to disqualify themselves from giving blood for transfusions. Through such questioning, officials said, 13 percent of prospective donors, whose names are kept confidential, have been eliminated in recent months.

In addition, blood banks in the area say that concern by potential donors over AIDS has contributed to a decline in blood supplies. The blood-bank officials say such concern is unwarranted, since needles used to draw blood from a donor are not reused.

Blood-bank officials tried to impress upon their Roslyn visitors the size of the operation. "We distribute and collect 1.2 million blood units every year," Mr. Lowy said. "That's a very large operation done with extraordinary care."

Roslyn members felt that there were less likely to be high-risk types in their suburban setting. "There's not going to be many homosexuals in a group like ours," Mr. Maslow said. "If there are, there aren't as many as in the general public." Moral Question Posed

But, Dr. Bove said, "Suppose you have a father who's pressuring his son to give him blood, and the son is a homosexual and is afraid to tell his father the truth?"