

IBTS publishes 2019 Annual Report - vCJD deferral reversed – Bone Marrow Registry recruitment changed

IBTS Chief Executive Officer Orla O'Brien welcomed the publication of the 2019 IBTS Annual Report today (Tuesday). "Donor numbers remained relatively stable for 2019 with a slight increase in first time donors attending of .9% over the previous year, while there was an overall marginal increase in donors attending of .6%. The IBTS successfully maintained the blood supply to hospitals throughout the year.

"The IBTS embraces change and benchmarks itself against international best practice in transfusion services. One of the most significant changes in donor deferral criteria happened in 2019, when the IBTS lifted the ban on donating blood by people who had spent one year or more in the UK between 1980 and 1996 because of the risk of transmission of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD)," said Ms O'Brien.

The vCJD deferral review was led by Professor Stephen Field, Medical and Scientific Director, who organised a review workshop with relevant international and national experts to provide the best advice on whether to lift the ban or not.

"This major review was carried out on the measures implemented in 2002 to mitigate the effects of transmission of vCJD. At the time of the implementation of these measures there had been 4 reported cases of transmission of vCJD in the United Kingdom arising out of blood donations from 3 people who subsequently were found to have the disease. A measure implemented in 1999 to remove white cells by filtration from all blood components (Leucodepletion) appears to have been successful in preventing transmission of vCJD as no cases have been reported since this intervention. The Medical Advisory Committee reviewed the evidence and was assisted by invited experts from the fields of neurology, blood transfusion and veterinary health, and the change was implemented in October," said Prof Field.

"Until recently donors had to specifically make a request to join the bone marrow registry. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the blood stem cell donor recruitment pathway was changed. Now, all blood donors of the appropriate age are invited to join the registry, when they attend clinic to donate blood. This has resulted in a significant increase in donor interest to become blood stem cell donors. In 2019, 2758 new volunteers gave blood samples to join the Irish Unrelated Bone Marrow Registry which will be added to the current registry of over 21,000 potential donors. This represents a 7-fold increase in recruitment compared to the previous year. Donations (blood stem cell and donor lymphocytes) from 6 Irish donors were facilitated in 2019, for national and international patients while a total of 54 unrelated donor transplants were performed. 45 by St. James's Hospital and 9 by Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin," he added.

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https://www.giveblood.ie/Media/Publications/Annual_Reports/

Blood Facts

- Red cells have a shelf life of just 35 days
- 1 in 4 of us will need a blood transfusion at some point in our lives
- Just 8% of the population have O negative blood – these are universal donors