



## **IPOPI position statement on blood donation by MSM<sup>1</sup>**

The International Patient Organisation for Primary Immunodeficiencies (IPOPI) considers the issue of blood donation and men having sex with men (MSM), as a safety and risk management issue rather than a social or political debate. IPOPI strongly believes that blood donation safety is paramount for patients receiving blood and plasma derived medicinal products (PDMPs) and should be the first principle guiding blood donation legislation and policy.

IPOPI is the global organisation representing patients living with Primary Immunodeficiencies (PIDs), a large group of more than 250 chronic and rare diseases in which the immune system or parts of the immune system do not function correctly. A large majority of PID patients (around 70%) need to have access to immunoglobulin replacement therapy regularly on a prophylactic basis. Immunoglobulins are PDMPs that PID patients need throughout their entire life to be able to fight infections. Patients with PIDs, as well as other patients requiring PDMPs, need to be ensured that the products they receive have the highest standards of safety and that decisions on donor deferrals are based on science and accurate scientific data.

Deferrals for MSM were put in place in the 1980s by many national health agencies all over the world as a result of the HIV transmissions through blood transfusions in the 1970s. Since then, more deferrals have been established to ensure that blood and blood-products/PDMPs recipients receive safe products including deferral of people who have resided in the UK between 1980 and 1996 (to avoid possible risks of vCJD), UK residents, persons with haemophilia and their partners, people who have been sexually active in parts of the world where HIV and AIDS are widespread. These deferrals do not assess individually the persons pertaining to these groups, but are established on the basis of evidence-based criteria that are reviewed periodically.

We consider that the safety of blood and eliminating the risks for recipients to contract infectious diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B or C through blood products, PDMPs and blood donations is paramount. Policy changes need to be supported by scientific data showing that a change would not present an increased risk for the safety of recipients. IPOPI strongly believes that national decisions around changes to any type of blood donor deferral policies should always be based on a risk assessment based on scientific evidence and should be devoid of political or social pressures.

IPOPI is willing to discuss and consider new approaches to donor screening and deferral policies if they can ensure that the safety of blood products and PDMPs will remain at the highest level for patients whose lives depend on these treatments.

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<sup>1</sup> MSM: Men having sex with men