

# Concerns About Blood Supply

Just how safe is America's blood supply? Based on public perception, the answer is not very. According to a recent survey, 84.3 percent of Americans are concerned about the safety of the U.S. blood supply, and only eight percent would elect to receive a transfusion from the current supply.

Unfortunately, statistics support this concern. With current screening methods, the average patient who is transfused with five units of blood runs a 1 in 6,800 risk of being infected with either HIV, hepatitis B or C, or human T-lymphotrophic virus, which has been associated with T-cell leukemia and lymphoma. The risk is even higher for people who receive frequent transfusions or large quantities of blood.

"Compared to studies pub-

lished the Federal Aviation Administration, the risk of receiving an infection from a blood transfusion is 1,000 times higher than the risk of injury on a commercial airline," reported Frank Strobl, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Surprisingly, less than half of survey respondents whom had experience with blood transfusions said that they were informed by their physicians about the risks of accidental infection. These contrasts sharply with the findings of an American Opinion Research survey of physicians, nearly 75 percent of who felt that they adequately advise patients on the risks.

To respond to the need for in-

formation about blood transfusions and the nation's blood supply, The Coalition for Transfusion Safety has launched a Web site for both the general public and the medical community. The site provides news, scientific abstracts and events, related to increasing both the volume of the blood supply and the safety of receiving a blood transfusion.

"Therefore, the Coalition's mission is twofold: to educate professionals and the public about the need to remain committed to improving the safety of our country's blood, and to encourage the public to donate blood to maintain an abundant supply."

To learn more, visit The Coalition for Transfusion Safety's Web site at [www.transfusionsafety.org](http://www.transfusionsafety.org).

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