



To the Editor:

Dr Julia Frohlich is to be commended in her article in the July issue for maintaining the supply and monitoring the quality of the Blood Bank. The prompt initiation of Hepatitis "C" control is clearly a measure of the Blood Bank's concern.

Contrary to this, I was appalled to hear the announcement on the television that the Blood Bank refuses to accept donor specification for the recipient. This would be bothersome and will require more record keeping, but to avoid a possible death sentence, no matter how unlikely, it is and should be anyone's prerogative.

The probability is statistically exceedingly low but the risk differs totally from that accepted from other choices seen throughout life, such as driving a car, walking across the street, contracting cancer, etc. In these and essentially all other categories of risk, there is a possibility of death but not an irreversible certainty.

The Blood Bank's Board ought to give this prerogative serious consideration and establish a protocol to permit the donors to direct and specify the individual recipient, with the proviso that if not used on the specified date, it would revert to the usual reserve.

George W Henry MD  
Honolulu

Dr Frohlich replies:

Directed donation is the procedure of assigning donated blood units to specific patients. The Blood Bank of Hawaii does not participate in directed donations for a number of reasons:

- 1) Our belief that the safest source of blood is from purely voluntary, "disinterested" community donors.
- 2) The lack of scientific data showing that directed donations are any safer than our current practice of accepting nonpaid community donors.
- 3) The need to preserve purely voluntary, disinterested community donors as the primary source of blood and blood products.
- 4) Our concern that directed donors, given their identified relationship with the requestor, might be less inclined to reveal accurate, personal, intimate and sensitive information to screening questions which they believe might reflect negatively on them vis-a-vis the requestor.

I am aware that the subject has generated an emotional response from people who desire to receive blood only from those they deem "safe." But scientific evidence has not demonstrated that the directed donor is safer than the anonymous, nonpaid community donor. (Strauss, *Transfusion*, 30:1990; Starkey, *JAMA*, 12/89; Goldfinger and Page, *Transfusion*, 29:1989; Cordell, *Transfusion*, 26:1986).

In contrast, there is scientific basis for the use of autologous blood, based on both safety and immunology. The Blood Bank of Hawaii has been involved in the collection of autologous blood for 20 years, and most hospitals today also participate in autologous blood collection. (NB: FDA regulatory requirements differ in collecting a patient's own blood for autologous use and collecting for homologous use through programs exemplified by the community blood center activities.)

Over the years, we have endeavored to keep the medical community informed of current blood-banking issues and practices through direct mailings and presentations in the *Hawaii Medical Journal*. It is through such ongoing dialogue and the interest and support of concerned physicians and community leaders that we are able to continue and improve our services to Hawaii's patients and their families.

Julia Frohlich MD  
President/Medical Director  
Blood Bank of Hawaii

## Growing Old

I have no fear of growing old —  
To me my silver is better than gold.  
Each of my years is precious and dear,  
But I can't stand hair that grows on my ear!

I love the wisdom experience spawns  
And the ideas planted in cerebral lawns —  
The ones that grow with seasons and years,  
Like the hairs that emerge on both of my ears.

The kind that is long and tickles inside,  
Or those on the rim — impossible to hide.  
They are the ones that make me shout  
When my wife feels compelled to pull them out!

But last week *aging* suddenly turned,  
And I lost those hairs my years had earned.  
A special clipper came to my aid  
And leveled that forest my ears had made.

But life goes on as everyone knows —  
We continue to age, and the hair regrows  
Time never stops. It forges ahead —  
If my ear hair stops growing, I'll know I am dead!

Robert S Flowers MD  
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