



Welcome to the new edition of the NHSBT Newsletter

**Ian Trenholm**

Our new Chief Executive says hello

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### Help keep blood stocks up over Winter

We know that every year stock levels fall over the Christmas and New Year period. That's why, this winter, we're asking those who have booked an appointment over this period, to make a special effort to keep it.

[Read the full article](#)

### 50 per cent of people can, could you donate platelets?

Calling all A negative or AB negative blood group donors. Are you eligible to donate platelets?

[Read the full article](#)



### Ask the Doctor

Our doctor, Gail Mifflin, answers questions about research into blood donation.

[Read the full article](#)

### Organ Donation – The longest wait

Nearly 7,000 people are waiting for a life-saving transplant on the UK's transplant waiting list. That's why we're asking everyone who can to sign up to the Organ Donor Register.

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### Read why Maggie Alphonsi chose to Bleed for England



The Rugby World Cup gave us a perfect opportunity to ask people to 'Bleed for England' and become blood donors. Leading women's rugby player Maggie Alphonsi explains why she joined our campaign.

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## IAN TRENHOLM - AN INTRODUCTION

### Thank You!

I would like to say hello and a huge thank you to all of you reading this Winter 2015 issue of The Donor magazine.

#### What a year it's been!

We have had two very exciting and successful campaigns this year and new blood donors have signed up in their thousands. Our campaigns wouldn't be as successful as they are without all your support so thank you all.

I would also like to say thank you to all the donors who have helped us to ensure that patients across England and North Wales have been able to get the blood that they need.

As the weather gets colder and the nights get darker, we now turn our focus to the winter months. This is traditionally a time when blood stocks dip due to people being distracted in the run up to Christmas and more people being deferred for short periods of time due to colds and flu.

If you do have an appointment to donate blood during the winter period please try your best to keep it. Missed appointments can put our operations under unnecessary pressure.

Don't forget, you can always check if you are eligible to donate before coming to a session. You can look easily online on our website.

As we come to the end of another year, I would like to thank you all for your dedication to blood and platelet donation and I wish you health and happiness for the upcoming year.

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## DONOR SESSIONS

### Keeping appointments

#### Please make a date to donate

We know that every year stock levels follow trends. They build through the spring, then dip once at the beginning of the summer and again in early autumn, before rising, slowly but steadily, through October and November.

But then the Christmas and New Year period comes, and three bank holidays in the space of a week arrive at a time when people, quite naturally, have other things on their minds. This means that we're not able to collect as much blood at exactly the time when hospitals order more.

Stocks reach their lowest point of the year at the beginning of January.

That's why, this winter, we're asking anyone who's eligible to donate to book an appointment to give blood by 8 January, and appealing to everyone who already has a booked appointment over this period to make a special effort to keep it.



Throughout the year, 80 per cent of donors keep their appointments to give blood, and that fantastic commitment is what ensures the supply of blood to hospitals. Naturally though, that dips over the winter period, when plans to donate are made with the best of intentions but then fall foul of winter colds and flu and the hustle and bustle of the busiest time of the year.

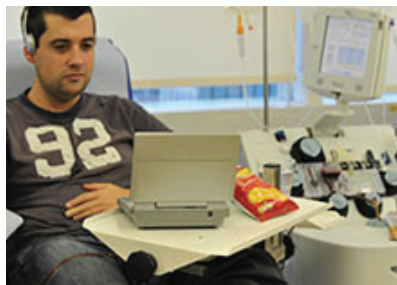
So if you can, please do book an appointment this winter, and encourage others to do the same.

We look forward to seeing you there!

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## PLATELET DONATION

### 50 per cent of people can, could you donate platelets?



Platelet donations save lives and help people survive cancer!

A single platelet donation could save the lives of up to 3 adults or 12 children. They are used to treat people with cancer, those undergoing a transplant or who have suffered a major haemorrhage.

Are you eligible to donate platelets? 50 per cent of people can, we really need more platelet

donors at the following Donor Centres:

Bristol, Cambridge, Edgware, Lancaster, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester and Oxford. So we want local donors to understand the importance of platelets and to check their eligibility and get donating.

We particularly need donors with group A negative or AB negative, because as 'universal donors' your platelets can be given to patients with different blood groups.

Donations can take up to 90 minutes and during that time you can enjoy time reading, watching TV, or use our free wifi facilities.

#### There are three simple steps to becoming a platelet donor:

- Call us on 0300 123 23 23 to talk through the process and book an appointment to be assessed or register your interest via [www.blood.co.uk/platelets](http://www.blood.co.uk/platelets)
- At the assessment we check your height and weight, vein suitability and take a quick blood sample to see if your platelet count is sufficient. A second sample will be taken if you are female to screen your blood for white blood cell antibodies
- We will advise on your suitability to give platelets and invite you to make your first appointment to donate at one of our 23 donor centres



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## ASK THE DOCTOR

### Research in Blood Donation

Our doctor, Gail Mifflin, answers questions about research into blood donation



**Q** Why do you do research?

**A** We do research to improve outcomes for patients and donors and to improve our service to the NHS more widely. One of the things that we are always keen to understand when deciding which research to do is how we can translate the research findings into changes that you see at a donor session and how we can make donating blood as safe and efficient as possible.

**Q** What research is currently ongoing?

**A** If you donate blood in one of our Donor Centres you are likely to have heard of the INTERVAL trial which is answering the question as to which are the safest donation intervals for giving blood. This is a collaboration between NHS Blood and Transplant and the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. For men we are looking at 8, 10 and 12 week intervals and women 12, 14 and 16 week intervals. It is possible that the same interval may not be best for all donors and our ultimate goal is to find the optimum interval for which it is safe for different donors to give blood. We will look at whether donation intervals should be tailored to donors by age, gender, genetic profile and other characteristics. The study started in 2010 and the final donors will finish the trial in June 2016. An amazing 50,000 donors signed up to be in this world leading study. We will be sharing the results widely with donors as well as academic conferences and other blood services from the end of next year.

If you want to know more about this study you can look at the website at [www.intervalstudy.org.uk](http://www.intervalstudy.org.uk)

## **Q** What research is coming up?

**A** We will be starting a study in the new year in some of our sessions looking to see if there are better methods of testing haemoglobin before you donate. At the moment we use the finger prick test, putting a drop of blood in copper sulphate. This might not be the best way to test haemoglobin levels in the future and we will be testing a slightly more sophisticated test on the finger prick sample. We will also test some new devices which can test haemoglobin levels through the skin without a finger prick test all and also sampling directly from the previous donation so, from your second donation, you would not need a finger prick test at all. It is important that any device testing haemoglobin through the skin works well in all of our donors so we will be particularly looking for Black donors to join this study.

In addition, also in the new year, we will be doing a research survey with the London School of Tropical Medicine to look at donor preferences in terms of the sessions we put on. The survey will be sent to 100,000 donors and will ask a number of questions about opening hours, where our sessions are located and changing the number of times you are allowed to donate per year amongst other things. We will use these answers in the future as we plan where and how we provide opportunities to donate blood.



## **Q** Who decides which research is done?

**A** The principle is that all research in blood donors should help to improve the well-being of our blood donors and enhance blood supplies. The University of Cambridge recently received a National Institute of Health and Research award to set up a Blood and Transplant Research Unit in partnership with us. This started in October 2015. We work closely with the university to agree a programme of research that will fit with the strategy of the organisation and that will provide results that can be translated directly back into how we provide our service.

## **Q** Can I get involved?

**A** We are keen to involve more blood donors in planning our research and influencing our studies. Ideally we would like to have a panel of around 50 donors who could be involved in various aspects of this. We are currently working out what commitment we would need from donors who might be willing to be involved and then we will be looking for some volunteers, so there will be more about this in the new year.

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## ORGAN DONATION STORY

### **The longest wait**

Nearly 7,000 people are waiting for a life-saving transplant on the UK's transplant waiting list. That's why we're asking everyone who can to sign up to the Organ Donor Register

At the end of November we launched our biggest ever winter organ donation campaign to highlight the true scale of the organ donor shortage and encourage people to join the NHS Organ Donor Register. The campaign launched with a 14 hour film called "The Wait" which gave viewers an insight into the life of Simon Howell and his family as he waits for a kidney transplant.

In the last 10 years almost 49,000 people in the UK have endured the wait for an organ transplant. Over 6,000 of those people, including 270 children, have died before receiving the transplant they desperately needed.

Of the almost 7,000 patients currently on the UK's transplant waiting list, 30 per cent have been waiting for more than two years and more than 500 of them have been waiting longer than five years.



## Simon's long wait

Born with a serious kidney condition, renal dysplasia, Simon had his first kidney transplant in 2005 thanks to his mum offering to be a living donor. Unfortunately, in 2009, the kidney failed. Simon was added to the transplant waiting list for a new kidney and has been waiting more than six years already.

"If you haven't told those closest to you that you want to be an organ donor, then please do it today. Tell them you want to be an organ donor and record your decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register"

Simon allowed cameras to record the reality of just one of the many days he has spent waiting for a suitable organ, to highlight just how difficult life is on the transplant waiting list.

Simon's day is dominated by his illness. His day is punctuated with four life-saving sessions of dialysis, indescribable fatigue and constant uncertainty for the future as he and his family live in hope that a suitable donor organ will become available.

Sally Johnson, NHS Blood and Transplant Director of Organ Donation and Transplantation said: "Simon's journey has already been a long and difficult one and while we are doing everything we can to make sure he gets the transplant he needs, the NHS cannot do this without help from other people"

"Sadly though, Simon is not alone. Statistically, more than one in ten people on the waiting list will die before they get the transplant they need. For some organs the picture is significantly bleaker. More than one in four people waiting for lungs will die."



## Do it today

"I'd ask you to imagine how you'd feel if someone close to you was waiting for a transplant; their whole life on hold, hoping someone will donate to save them. I'm sure we'd all hope an organ would be available to help someone we love - so shouldn't we all pledge to be organ donors so more lives can be saved?"

"If you haven't told those closest to you that you want to be an organ donor, then please do it today. Tell them you want to be an organ donor and record your decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register."

To join the NHS Organ Donor Register please go to [organdonation.nhs.uk](http://organdonation.nhs.uk) or call 0300 123 23 23 – Now is the #TimeToSign.

Our winter campaign will run until the 31st December and you can show your support for organ donation on social media by posting about signing up to the ODR and using the hashtag #TimeToSign. You can also share and view the video on [www.organdonation.nhs.uk/timetosign](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/timetosign)

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## CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

### Blood donors score a try



The Rugby World Cup gave us a perfect opportunity to ask people to 'Bleed For England' and become blood donors. Leading women's rugby player Maggie Alphonsi explains why she rolled up her sleeve and joined our campaign

This year, in addition to National Blood Week, we also launched a campaign to increase the number of new blood donors during the biggest sporting event of the year.

The #BleedForEngland campaign aimed to rally people in England to sign up to donate blood to help patients as well as support their own team during the world's biggest rugby tournament. We wanted to encourage 100,000 people to register as blood donors between England's first warm-up game and Saturday's World Cup Final and by the time the final whistle blew, 101,295 had signed up.

World Cup winners Jonny Wilkinson, Martin Johnson, Ben Kay, Jason Leonard (pictured below) and Maggie Alphonsi all backed the campaign by donating blood for the first

time. In addition, international players Dan Cole, James Haskell and Tom Croft swapped roles with employees at Boots, London Hilton on Park Lane and Grr's 2 Prr's, (a dog grooming company in Leicester), to free them up to donate.

### Online messages

"Now I know how easy it is I'll definitely be donating again. It's amazing to think that such a small act can help to save someone's life"



Online videos produced for the campaign were viewed millions of times on social media. Union and League rugby clubs across the country, including Bath, Bristol, Newcastle Falcons, North Bristol RFC, Newbury, Moseley, Preston Grasshoppers, Chipping Sodbury Ladies, Castleford Tigers and Widnes Vikings also supported the campaign, posting messages on social media and holding promotional events at their clubs to encourage their members to become donors.

Maggie Alphonsi, who was capped for England 74 times and was part of the Women's World Cup winning team in 2014 donated for the first time to support the campaign.

### Q What inspired you to become a blood donor?

A I know how important blood donation is as a close friend needed some during her treatment. It's something I have always wanted to do and now I know how easy it is I'll definitely be donating again. It's amazing to think that such a small act can help to save someone's life.

As someone from the black community, I am honoured to be supporting such a great cause and helping to raise awareness of blood donation within the black community. It is so important that more people from this community donate blood.



### Q What are your career highlights?

A My career highlights have to be singing the anthem to a home crowd in the 2010 World Cup final in England. My second career highlight had to be winning the World Cup in 2014 in France after two previous World Cup final defeats.

### Q What are you planning to do next?

A I am going to concentrate on developing my media career following my work with ITV at the Rugby World Cup. I hope to continue to inspire women in sport to show that they can be successful on and off the field of play.

## Margaret Alphonsi MBE, England Rugby World Cup Winner

Maggie Alphonsi is the face of international women's rugby and arguably one of the most well-known names in women's team sports on the planet.

Before announcing her international retirement last year, she represented her country an impressive 74 times, scored 28 tries, and helped England win a record breaking seven consecutive Six Nations crowns. Most recently she was a crucial member of the team that won the 2014 Rugby World Cup for the first time in 20 years and was part of the team that was crowned the BBC's Sports Personality Team of the Year.

Maggie is also a rugby commentator. Most recently, she was named as part of ITV's Rugby World Cup stellar broadcast line-up. Her inclusion in this line-up makes her the first ever former female player to commentate on men's international rugby.

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