



Blood Donors Questionnaires in Greece

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Letter to the Editor

Recently, the Greek Prime Minister referred to the "effacement" of one's sexual attitude as a criterion of exclusion from the questionnaires of blood donors. He gave prominence to this issue as an example of "modernization" of Greek life and society; however, it is obvious that as a non-expert in the field, he cannot be fully-informed of the conditions of safety of blood and blood derivatives. The respect of human dignity, behavior and private life are absolute values and any form of direct or even indirect assault is unacceptable. This consists an irrefutable conquest for the whole world and for the Greek society as well. Nevertheless, it shouldn't escape our attention that blood safety from infections is not entirely ensured through laboratory tests only. In particular, in cases of infectious factors like Retroviruses (HIV) there is no 100% safe test and the "window risk" (HIV infected blood/negative NAT results) is broadly accepted. This is the reason why all the world systems of blood donors include a suitable questionnaire before blood drawing as a primary "layer of safety". Actually, no blood withdrawal takes place only if there are indications of exclusion from the questionnaire. In current days we also have certain emerging contagious factors due to climate change and movement of populations (Monkeypox, West Nile virus). The difficulty in tracking all these factors (and others as well) with a 100% sensitivity and specificity and the costs of relevant tests emphasize the role that a formal donor's questionnaire plays in blood collection. How this fact will be practically implemented in a discrete and ethical mode, consistent to the principles of respect of human dignity is a matter linked to the broadness of the professional skills. The constant "update" of medical education and the continuing training of health professionals are mandatory too.

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