

REVIEW ARTICLE

ROLE OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKERS IN MANAGEMENT OF ANXIETY AND STRESS AMONG BLOOD DONORS WITH TRANSFUSION TRANSMISSIBLE INFECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Blood transfusion is a life-saving intervention and millions of lives are saved each year globally through this procedure. Unsafe transfusion practices put millions of people at risk of transfusion-transmissible infections (TTIs) and it is mandatory to test the donated blood for blood borne infectious diseases. This is an alarming situation requiring immediate action in appropriate counseling of donors before and after testing of their blood. It is really a challenge for blood banks and motivators if a blood donor is positive for infectious diseases. What is the role of blood bank in helping or guiding the donors to overcome their anxiety and stress? How a medical social worker could psychologically support and guide them to act as cause ambassadors for voluntary blood donation? Guidance and counseling would help them to live positively. Health education, compassionate care and teaching coping mechanisms would encourage them in overcoming their stress and anxiety.

Keywords: Blood Transfusion, Anxiety, Stress TTIs

INTRODUCTION

Hepatitis B and C, HIV, HTLV and syphilis infections are common among donated bloods and each and every blood collection is tested for the infectious markers. Donated bloods are released for transfusion only if none of these markers are detected. The proportion of safe donor is highest in systems where all donors are voluntary and non-remunerated¹. Social scientists and public health experts have considered that non-remunerative blood donations are the examples of unalloyed altruism². The blood donors are much to be appreciated for their social concern. Donating blood to others without expecting something is a humane act. Blood donors are the life savers as they come forward to donate blood in others' need.

Blood transfusion is a life-saving intervention and millions of lives are saved each year globally through this³. Unsafe transfusion practices put millions of people at risk of transfusion-transmissible infections (TTIs)⁴. It is mandatory to test the donated blood for infectious diseases. This is an alarming situation requiring immediate action of appropriate counselling of donors before and after testing for the infectious diseases.

It further shows the need to communicate the test results to the donors. These precautions not only inform donors of their health status, but also prevent them from donating again⁵. Notifying blood donors of their positive HIV test results provides an opportunity to

counsel said donors about HIV, which can be an important step in preventing further transmission of the virus and this notification can facilitate the initiation of treatment early in the course of infection, which is known to diminish and delay onset of HIV – related morbidity⁶.

The important impact of HIV/AIDS is rejection and discrimination. HIV/AIDS infected persons may not be accepted by the society. Though there are several factors that cause HIV infection, many people think that the disease is the result of immoral behaviour. Society strongly believes that sexual promiscuity is the reason for spread of HIV/AIDS infection⁷.

The moment they know that their blood is infected and they cannot donate blood during their life time, donors may feel upset and stressed about their infection. What is the role of the blood bank in helping or guiding donors to overcome their anxiety and stress? How could medical social workers psychologically support and guide them to act as cause ambassadors for voluntary blood donation? It is really a challenge for blood banks and medical social workers to help in overcoming the stress if a donor is found to be positive for infectious diseases.

When an individual blood donor comes to know that he / she is infected they may go through lot of anxiety and stress about the infection and it would lead to a negative outcome. A medical social worker should take part to counsel them, accepts them as they are without showing

any differences, show them that they are valued and cared for, listening to their worries without interrupting, allowing them to ventilate their feelings, anger and frustration, clarifying their doubts, showing kindness and concern towards would help them to lead a normal life and to cope with their illness. Make them to understand that their life is precious and help them to identify how important they are in the society. This would help an individual to come out of the stress and prevent them from taking drastic decisions. The following measures could be adopted to take care of infected donors.

- i. Pre and post counseling before the status is revealed.
- ii. Listening patiently and allowing them to ventilate their feelings
- iii. Giving them assurance that the confidentiality will be maintained
- iv. Regular follow up of the infected donors with regard to their treatment plan or further supportive counselling.
- v. Infected blood donors can be gathered to share and discuss with each other of their conditions after mutual agreement, which would help them to come out with some rehabilitating solutions.
- vi. Medical personnel could volunteer in clarifying doubts and giving compassionate care, referring them to appropriate clinics for further management.
- vii. Identify the disease and explain the treatment plan and prognosis.
- viii. Advise them to undergo treatment and explain the costs of laboratory workups and treatment plan.
- ix. The blood bank could help the donors in bearing the expense of the treatment if their policy permits or should involve NGOs to take part.
- x. Explain to the donors in simple way about the signs and symptoms and what to be done if symptoms worsens
- xi. Help them to accept the condition and live with the infection by providing health education,

teaching those coping skills and strategies, which would help them to live within society with understanding.

- xii. Compassionate care and continued counseling support would make them feel happy and which would avoid isolating them from others.
- xiii. Encourage them to be with their family and friends, to share their ideas, fears and doubts so that it might help them to come out of their stress and anxiety.

CONCLUSION:

Donor care, guidance and counseling for infected blood donors are as important as donor recognition. Health education, compassionate care and teaching of coping mechanisms, could help them to live happily in the society. Infected donors could actively involve themselves as cause ambassadors for the blood banks and motivate others to donate blood. Active participations of the infected donors would encourage them in overcoming the stress and anxiety.

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