



## **Blood Donations Support Cancer Patients**

The medical profession continues to make progress in the fight against cancer. From preventive measures, to screening for early detection, to novel therapies, the armamentarium against this disease continues to expand.

Blood transfusion support of cancer patients under treatment have made many of the new treatments possible. Bone marrow transplants to treat leukemias, lymphomas, and malignancies that have spread to the bone marrow require transfusions for weeks, or sometimes months, until the donated tissue successfully engrafts. Those precious blood donations are like special 'lifeboats' for those patients who are in a courageous fight for their lives.

Chemotherapy, a first line of treatment for many types of cancer, has significant toxic effects on the bone marrow tissue that is the source of our blood cells. That is why many cancer patients are able to undergo aggressive chemotherapy treatments only if they can be supported with blood transfusions: Red Blood Cells to relieve anemia and bleeding; Platelets to stop the blood loss that may result from the low platelet counts commonly associated to chemotherapy; and in some cases, the need for white blood cells known as Granulocytes, to help fight off infection in patients under treatment.

New immunotherapies are under development to boost the body's ability to destroy any cancer cells that are not taken care of by surgery or radiotherapy. Drugs that are less toxic to bone marrow cells are also being developed, with several clinical trials underway. However, drug development and licensing is a lengthy regulatory process that takes years to complete. Until then, patients depend on conventional therapies requiring transfusion support

Blood donations are an irreplaceable lifeline to many cancer patients. I encourage our readers to give blood regularly and join in the battle against cancer that many citizens in our area are fighting every day.

Germán F. Leparc, M.D.  
Chief Medical Officer  
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Florida Blood Services is an independent, not for profit, community based healthcare provider for the blood needs of patients at medical facilities throughout the Tampa Bay area. Over 800 volunteer donations are required daily. For further information or donation locations, call 1-800-68-BLOOD (25663) or visit [www.fbsblood.org](http://www.fbsblood.org)