

Bridging the Gap: Educating Hospital Partners on the Value of Blood

Introduction

Hospitals often treat blood as a commodity, overlooking its complexity as a life-saving, regulated resource. This disconnect can lead to undervaluation and strained partnerships. Our project addresses this challenge by creating an educational Fact Sheet to inform hospital personnel about the blood supplier's role, the unique nature of blood products, and collaborative strategies to protect the community blood supply.

Current state

How Hospitals think about blood as a Commodity

To help blood centers communicate more effectively and strengthen partnerships, we need to understand what questions hospitals are asking and why. Utilizing internet search engines, we reviewed frequently asked questions related to blood availability, including those commonly asked by hospitals. This analysis focused on identifying patterns in inquiries raised across hospitals roles and representing all contact points a blood center is likely to interact and/or negotiate with.

Our review identified two sets of questions: those frequently raised by laboratory leaders, operations teams, and administrators, and those raised by executive and finance teams.

Laboratory leaders, operations teams, and administrators frequently ask:

- Is there a blood shortage right now?
- How long will the shortage last?
- Which blood types are most limited?
- How much blood should we keep on hand?
- Can our blood supplier guarantee supply?

Executive and finance teams frequently ask:

- Why does blood cost increase during shortages?
- Why can't blood be sourced like other medical supplies?
- Why can't we just buy more blood?
- Are blood shortages preventable?

Core Insight

Analysis of themes and patterns of these questions can be synthesized to two informational needs. Hospitals are really asking:

- How exposed are we to risk, and how predictable is the blood supply?
- Why isn't blood behaving like a commodity?

Hospitals are not questioning the importance of blood; they are asking about its **reliability and predictability**.

When hospitals understand that blood is not a commodity, but a shared clinical resource, collaboration improves, waste decreases, and patient care is better protected.

To address these responses, we created a fact sheet, "Blood from Our Center to Yours", which incorporates these concepts. This fact sheet is intended to be used as a tool, reference, and bridge for dialogue to promote effective partnerships between blood centers and hospitals.

Educate

How is blood different from other manufactured products?

Blood is a Living, Human-Derived Therapy

- Not manufactured and cannot be standardized or replicated
- Each unit is biologically unique by blood type, antigens, and donor factors
- Substitution is limited or impossible in many clinical scenarios

Supply is Donor-Dependent, not Vendor-Controlled

- Availability depends on donor turnout and community participation
- Influenced by seasonality, weather, public health events, and emergencies
- Cannot be mass-produced or rapidly scaled on demand

Shelf Life is Short and Non-Negotiable

- Platelets expire in days and red blood cells in weeks
- Expired units cannot be reprocessed or recertified
- Overstocking increases waste; understocking risks patient harm

Blood Requires Active, Just-in-Time Management

- Managed daily using real-time utilization and dynamic par levels
- Bulk purchasing models and long-term stockpiling used for traditional supplies do not apply
- Close coordination between hospitals and blood suppliers is essential

Blood is a Shared Resource with Shared Responsibilities

- Blood is collected locally and used locally
- Waste at one hospital impacts regional availability for all patients
- Hospitals and blood centers are partners in managing a rare, critical resource.

Best Practices for Effective Partnerships

Educate stakeholders

Share the fact sheet to build understanding of the complexity and value of blood.

Reinforce clinical partnership

Highlight blood supplier's role as clinical partners, emergency preparedness collaborators, and data-sharing allies.

Promote shared responsibility

Encourage hospitals to host blood drives, amplify efforts on social media, and participate in co-branded initiatives.

Communicate value

Connect blood supply realities to community impact and patient care outcomes in all discussions.

Agreements Through Partnership Discussions

Share Information

Be transparent about operational realities, regulatory requirements, and cost drivers.

Seek Agreement

Focus on shared goals such as patient safety, reliable supply, and community health.

Ask Questions

Clarify hospital priorities and constraints to identify win-win solutions.

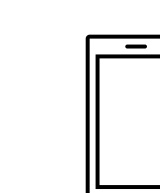
Invite Feedback

Encourage dialogue to refine proposals and strengthen trust.

Share Interests

Clearly communicate your objectives, concerns, and justifications (e.g., sustainability, donor recruitment costs, compliance obligations).

BLOOD FROM OUR CENTER TO YOURS



To download the fact sheet, "Blood from Our Center to Yours", scan the QR code.



Presented at the America's Blood Centers 2026 Annual Meeting By:

Jessica Lantz

Director, Manufacturing and Distribution
Bloodworks Northwest

Cliff Numark

President & CEO
OneBlood

Theresa Pina

Chief Growth Officer
Gulf Coast Blood

Robert Simpson

VP, Hospital Services
San Diego Blood Bank