

Student docs to boost voluntary donation of blood in Bihar

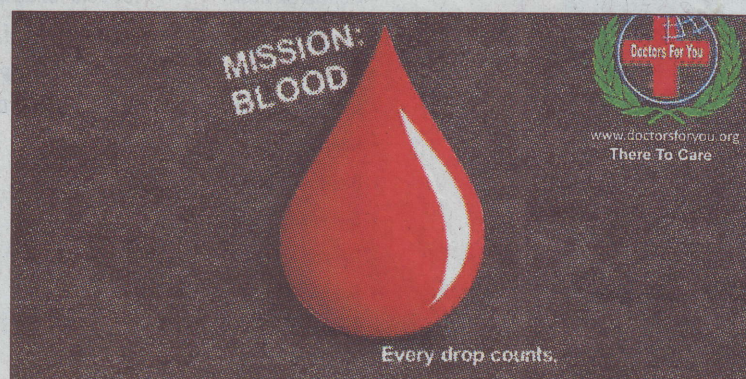
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: At a time when politicians are inciting differences between Marathis and Biharis, a group of student doctors have set aside regional differences and have taken a step forward to encourage blood donation across the country. The motley group of doctors, which includes enthusiastic youngsters from the city, has zeroed in on Bihar for a pilot project because of the state's abysmal track record in voluntary blood donation.

The group, which works under the aegis of 'Doctors For You', had successfully launched a platelet donation drive in the city last year which helped evolve a network of platelet donors available to critically-ill patients. They have now set their sights on developing a 'Safe Blood' programme by encouraging voluntary blood donation programmes.

"The blood collected annually in the country is 4,532,395 units, which falls way short of the required target of 10,000,000 units, per year. The situation in Bihar is among the worst with only 23% voluntary blood donation," said Dr Ravikant Singh, who is heading the youth initiative. According to him, due to the lack of awareness, a man would even hesitate to donate blood to his wife. From an unorganised blood-banking system to a shortage of blood supplies, the state programme is plagued with problems, said the doctors.

The 3,000 student doctors have taken the initiative to host camps in colleges, rope in religious and spiritual leaders to motivate the masses as well as encourage political representatives to endorse the campaign. To begin with, they intend to collect 35,000 units



EVERY DROP MATTERS: A poster announcing the blood campaign

BLOOD COUNT

- The annual blood collection in India is 4,532,395 units, while the required target is 10,000,000 units every year
- Voluntary blood donation accounts for only 56% of blood collected in the country
- Maharashtra is better off with 82% of the total blood collected through voluntary blood donation
- The state contributes 20% of India's total voluntary blood collection

of blood through voluntary donation in Bihar in 2008. They will then move to other parts of the country.

Pointing out that Mumbai and Maharashtra as a whole were self-sufficient, the budding doctors said there still were gaps. "In Mumbai, for instance, there is sufficient blood available but scared relatives don't know

whom to contact when faced with a crises," said another doctor, adding they were in the process of setting up a blood and platelet information centre, a 24 x 7 call centre-like service in the next three months, which would direct relatives to the nearest available centre.

The project will be flagged off by the founder of the Art of Living Foundation, Sri Sri Ravishankar at K J Somaiya Hospital in Sion on Sunday.

Dr Sanjay Jadhav, who heads the State Blood Transfusion Council (SBTC), said the government body supports any initiative to encourage voluntary blood donation. "All voluntary organisations working in the field have a common goal to boost voluntary blood donation and they have our support," he said. About the information centre, he however, underlined the need for a sustainable endeavour. "The SBTC also has a website, which shows patients and their relatives, the latest status of blood availability," he added.

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