

Blood ties, now between hospitals

New call centre to link city's blood banks, help track down that life-saving bottle faster

Neha Bhayana
Mumbai, March 9

PICTURE THIS: Your loved one is fighting for life at a Mahim nursing home after a near-fatal accident in the wee hours and the doctor tells you to get two bottles of rare O-Negative blood.

You rush from a blood bank in Bandra to another in Andheri, but there is no stock. Frantic phone calls reveal that it is available at a blood bank at Breach Candy, in the opposite direction to where you are heading.

What if you can't make it back to the nursing home in time?

Scary, but there is little choice, considering there are 56 blood banks in the city and no system in place to connect them to hospitals and those in need.

The Maharashtra State Blood Transfusion Council website enables one to search for availability of specific blood types. But not everyone has access to the Internet.

Non-governmental organisation Doctors for You hopes to change that.

The organisation's Mumbai chapter which comprises more than 250 medical students from state-run, civic and private hospitals as well

some engineering and

chartered accountancy students, will be setting up a 24/7 call centre where relatives can

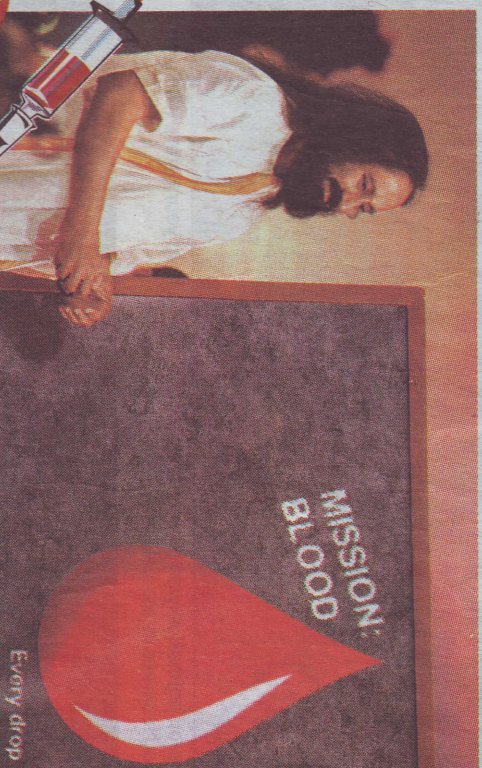
call to find out which nearby blood bank has stock of the blood group they need.

"There is a huge gap

between blood banks and hospitals so patients' relatives have to run around for blood. In emergency, this is especially distressing," said KEM resident doctor Ravikant Singh. "We should be able to set up the centre within three months."

This helpline number is part of the organisation's national campaign, 'Safe Blood, Safe India', which was launched by spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at a Mahatsang in Sion on Sunday.

56 blood banks, soon just a call away



Spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the launch of the campaign at KJ Somaiya ground, Sion.

To donate or organise a blood donation camp at your office/housing society

visit www.doctorsforyou.org OR

call helpline 9967056832, 9324334359 OR

e-mail: info@doctorsforyou.org or

doctorsforyou@gmail.com

The campaign aims to build surplus reserves of safe blood through drives — only 45,32,395 units out of the required target of one crore units of blood was collected in India last year — and increase the rate of voluntary blood donation which accounts for only 40 to 45 per cent of blood collection.

While Mumbai has high rate of voluntary blood donation (72 per cent) compared to the rest of the country, it is not

72 per cent of blood requirement is met through voluntary donors in Mumbai.

In UP, only 13 per cent of blood donation is voluntary, in Bihar, it is 23 per cent and in Delhi, 24 per cent.

The rest of the blood requirement is met through relatives of patients who have no choice but to donate.

enough. "In the West, 100 per cent of the blood requirement is met through voluntary donation. Why should we force relatives and friends to donate?" said Dr Sanjay Jhadav, head of the Maharashtra State Blood Transfusion Council.

Doctors for You has started a pilot project in Bihar, where voluntary blood donation is only 23 per cent. "We are holding awareness lectures in public places and putting up hoardings with

messages from 10 political, film, sports and other personalities across Bihar. Dr Abdul Kalam and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar have already agreed," said Singh.

Doctors for You plans to organise blood donation camps at schools, colleges, workplaces and railway stations in Mumbai, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the first phase and cover the entire country, eventually.

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