

National blood donor pool significantly smaller than previously thought

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According to a new study in TRANSFUSION, the number of individuals in the U.S. who are eligible to donate blood may be smaller than previously believed — approximately 60 million fewer people. The new figures suggest that only 37 percent of the U.S. population is currently eligible to donate blood, and with anticipated demographic changes, that percentage is likely to drop.

“The conventional method of calculating eligible donors indicates that there are approximately 177 million eligible donors in the U.S. population,” said Jeffrey McCullough, one of the world’s leaders in transfusion medicine and blood banking. “This study indicates that only 111 million individuals in the U.S. are eligible to donate blood.”

Efforts to ensure donor and recipient safety have reduced the population of eligible voluntary blood donors. The current method for determining eligible blood donors focuses exclusively on age criteria. The lower eligible donor pool estimates as described in this study are based on a more stringent model that excludes individuals from donation due to such factors as high-risk behavior, disease exposure, presence of chronic diseases and age.

“As additional donor restrictions are implemented and the population ages, the country could lose more and more willing donors, which could pose an even greater threat to our national blood supply,” said Karen Shoos Lipton, chief executive officer of AABB. “Ensuring an adequate supply of blood is increasingly more challenging, and these new data suggest it is extremely important that eligible donors give blood more frequently.”

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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