

KINS Community Comment

April 22, 2013

Hello. This is Tom Schallert, Administrator at the Northern California Community Blood Bank with a Community Comment.

I have provided community comments regarding training in blood banking we have been doing at the Uyo University Teaching Hospital in Southwestern Nigeria. Our team spent six weeks in 2010 and 2011 doing assessments and training in blood banking and have demonstrated success. Voluntary blood collections have increased from virtually zero to 22%.

We made a 5 year commitment to improve the safety and availability of blood for the hospital and our original plan was to travel again in 2012 for further follow up training. Unfortunately, the US State Department recommended only essential travel to Nigeria so we did not return last year.

We had made a commitment to our colleagues so an alternate plan was developed. A team came to the United States for training and to see what should be their objective long term.

Northern California Community Blood Bank Staff spent 5 days with our colleagues training in Public Relations, Donor Recruitment, Blood Component Manufacturing, and Immunohematology. St. Joseph Hospital provided training regarding transfusion so the team was able to complete the "donor vein to patient vein" training.

The team spent a week at Blood Source in Sacramento and worked with them on similar topics and explored possible video conferencing for training as well as telemedicine options.

Finally, they traveled to Arlington, Virginia for the America's Blood Center's Annual Meeting where they participated in an International Blood Safety Forum as well as the Scientific, Medical, Technical and Administrative training provided by ABC.

We are in the process of identifying equipment they will need to have successful blood drives knowing a small van that can carry staff, donor beds and related supplies are needed. We will be asking some local service clubs, especially Rotary Clubs for assistance.

The team remarked when leaving the north coast, patients here are blessed with a wonderful blood bank and supportive community. So much was shared and they want to assure all of us they will not disappoint; they will be successful in having a safe and adequate supply of blood.

It was one week ago today that the terrible tragedy at the Boston Marathon occurred and a few days ago the explosions in West, Texas. Great skill by first responders and staff at hospitals saved so many. Our hearts go out to families who lost loved ones. In both tragedies, blood donors had given blood in the days before and lives were saved because blood from was on the shelves ready for those patients.

In Nigeria when tragedy occurs, many patients die because blood is not there. Over 250,000 patients, including women in childbirth, accident victims, children with malaria and other trauma, die because blood is not available. Our colleagues there are committed to changing that and to becoming a center of excellence. They will train others and provide blood to other hospitals throughout their state so safe volunteer blood is always available.

Northern California Community Blood Bank, our partners at Blood Source, Rotary International, Global Healing, the Foundation for America's Blood Centers and Safe Blood Africa will continue to assist. As I have said numerous times when explaining our involvement in a country so far away, "Since we can do this, we must."

It continues to be an honor to represent your Northern California Community Blood Bank and the Rotary Club of Eureka. This has been Tom Schallert with a Community Comment.