



## Donors picking up

Amar thinks the donor decline has bottomed out. Between January 1997 and 1998, the number of donors actually rose by about 0.3% despite more rigorous — and time consuming — blood screening, the release of the Krever report and fallout from the hepatitis C issue.

The number of donors could increase still more under the direction of the CBS, which has vowed to work at retaining and increasing the donor base. “We can have a great CBS, but if people aren’t rolling up their sleeves we have no system,” Amar says.

Polls and focus groups conducted by the CBS have revealed that donors are primarily motivated by a desire to help others. They are concerned about continuity within the new system — they want to see the same people at the donor clinics — and they like the recognition program. A recent poll found that 20% of donors feel the system will be safer after the CBS is in place. The CBS plans to contact all 1.2 million Canadian donors with information about the new system and the reasons for the transfer. In addition, 150 000 to 200 000 former donors will be approached.

Amar says focus group results indicate that most Canadians seem willing to come back as donors. “The data are very promising. . . . The support for what CBS is planning to do is high and that’s really good news.” There is also great interest in the CBS itself — its Web site ([www.cbstb-btscs.com](http://www.cbstb-btscs.com)) has had close to 100 000 hits since its December launch.

Trevor-Deutsch agrees that people want more information and that “we have to rebuild confidence in the blood system.” He favours a specific, well-explained consent form that conveys the risks and benefits associated with blood use. “There’s widespread distrust of Canada’s blood system,” says Trevor-Deutsch. “In this unusual and hopefully transitory situation [that has arisen] because of HIV, hepatitis C and Krever, we have to give more information.”

The CBS may have to give more than just information. Brian Crowell, director of the Canadian Blood Secretariat at Health Canada and a member of the transition board, says that to maintain volunteer donations, organizers will look at “other remuneration in kind.”

“Job number one [for the CBS] is donors, donors, donors,” says Trevor-Deutsch. “We are collectively at risk if we let blood supplies drop.” ?

## Making the transition: tight deadline for establishing new blood agency

The new Canadian Blood Services Board of Directors has to deal with some 280 issues before officially taking over governance of the blood system from the Red Cross on Sept. 1.

“We think that it’s doable,” says Bernard Doyle, director of the recently dismantled CBS transition bureau. Issues include developing a communications plan, assessing Red Cross facilities and equipment, and hiring a CEO and other staff. “We want to make sure staff are transferred and in no way lose anything,” said Doyle.

When he addressed the Joint Scientific Conference of the Canadian Society for Transfusion Medicine and the Canadian Red Cross Society in Ottawa on May 8, Doyle said: “Some people think we are doing major reform while taking it over. Our major concern is to take it over as safely and seamlessly as possible.” Still, there will be some significant changes inherent in the new form of governance. Most importantly, there will be a single point of accountability: the CEO and Board of Directors.

The new board is also planning on establishing a different, closer relationship with hospitals so that

products are used more efficiently. “Donor and consumer feedback are also vital,” said Doyle.

The board may think it is busy now, but it should wait until after reforms begin Sept. 1. In the 6 to 18 months following the change in governance, the 13-member board will work with staff to assess key issues such as types of funding (government grants and cost recovery) and whether to continue providing core services. During the following 3 to 5 years, there will be a major review of the system.

Regulations and surveillance will also be improved to meet recommendations contained in the Krever report. Brian Crowell, director of the Canadian Blood Secretariat at Health Canada and a member of the transition board, says that regulation and surveillance have been “slow, passive and poorly resourced” and “the system was dysfunctional.” Crowell said Health Canada will help strengthen the regulatory role with better resources, integrated data collection and analysis, and by being more aggressive in raising standards. “We would like to become a world leader in regulation and surveillance,” said Crowell.