

Annotations

A lifeline of blood

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The first provincial unit of the fledgling National Blood Transfusion Service officially opened 60 years ago, in Vancouver, BC, on Feb. 3, 1947. Thus began Canada's national program based upon the free distribution to hospital

patients of blood and blood products. Of particular note is that the service accepted only voluntary, unremunerated blood donors, a policy that continues to this day. Dr. William Stuart Stanbury (1905–1962) was the originator of this plan. The first person to donate

blood was Bill Hebert, special events director for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Hebert interviewed Stanbury while giving the donation.

In those early years of blood donations, each clinic had a registered nurse who supervised the staff and operations of the clinic. Physicians did the majority of blood collecting, helped by a nursing assistant. A reusable glass bottle was connected by rubber tubing to a reusable needle. Between clinics, the nursing assistants cleaned the used donor sets and the used administration sets, reassembled them and sterilized them. They also cleaned the glass bottles, prepared the preservative chemical and added the appropriate volume to each bottle, capped the bottles with new rubber stoppers and autoclaved them — quite a production! An administration set was delivered with each order of blood. Local hospitals had cross-matching done for them at the blood centre on a 24/7 basis.

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Blood donor clinic, early 1950s, Vancouver, BC. Dr. B. Patrick Moore, standing left, takes blood from an unidentified donor, with help from a nursing assistant (unidentified).