



SICKLE CELL DISEASE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION D'ANÉMIE FALCIFORME DU CANADA

December 21st, 2015

The Honourable Jane Philpott, PC, MP
Minister of Health of Canada
70 Colombine Driveway
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K9

Hon.Jane.Philpott@Canada.ca

Dear Minister Jane Philpott:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada/ Association d'Anémie Falciforme du Canada (SCDAC/AAFC) to express our support towards amending the MSM donor deferral policy from a 5-year to a 12-month period.

Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood condition that results in an abnormality of haemoglobin, the substance that carries oxygen within red blood cells. This abnormal haemoglobin can lead to red blood cell deformation and break down, increased blood viscosity or "sluggishness", and both acute and chronic organ dysfunction.

There are different treatments available to individuals with sickle cell disease. While some will require occasional blood transfusion as part of treatment, others rely on continuous blood transfusion.

As such, it is important that SCDAC/AAFC ensures there is adequate safe and secure phenotypic blood supply in Canada.

Phenotypic Blood

Phenotypic matched blood means that the blood has been matched to your blood group as closely as possible. This reduces the chance of having a transfusion reaction and of developing an Antibody to the blood. However, because most blood donors are from ethnic backgrounds different to Sickle Cell Disease patients, there is a limited supply of suitable blood.

Over the past recent months, one of our representatives was engaged in consultation discussions on the current MSM Donor Deferral policy review with other blood recipient groups and representatives of the community hosted by CBS. The meetings were very informative and presented the latest scientific evidence and data related to the MSM deferral policies as experienced in other countries, and most importantly the meetings were impressively open, honest and constructive on reaching a consensus. The majority of the participant groups were in support of changing the current policy of 5 year deferral to one year time-based deferral.

SCDAC/AAFC supports changing the deferral from 5 years to 1 year and believes that this will strongly impact the younger generation's reaction to issues of social justice therefore potentially securing safe blood supply from that cohort. We thank you in advance and look forward to your positive response

Sincerely,

Lanre Tunji-Ajayi

President/ED

Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada/ Association d'Anémie Falciforme du Canada (SCDAC/AAFC)