Blood donation within the family: the transmission of values and practices

Johanne Charbonneau, Anne Quéniart, Elisha Laprise
Research Chair on Social Aspects of Blood Donation, INRS, Canada

Background and aims
Previous research suggests that blood donation is a type of prosocial behaviour that is most influenced by family socialization. Donors, more often than non-donors, come from families with members who also give blood. Our study aims to examine the role of family in the transmission of values and practices associated with blood donation. Discrepancies of forms of transmission from interviewees were explored, notably imitation (modeling), direct initiation, and parent-child communication to blood drives, as well as certain social determinants such as religion.

Method
• Qualitative study
• Data collection through semi-structured interviews
• Donor recruitment with the collaboration of Héma-Québec

Selection criteria
- Parents aged 40 and above
- At least one donation each year over the last 3 years
- Respondents were divided based on main sociodemographic indicators

Thematic analyses of interviews through a comparison of 3 types of parent-child dyads (PNDs)

- Average duration of interviews: 45 minutes
- The study took place over a 6-month period
- Families were recruited based on Héma-Québec’s donors’ PROFILE database
- The study received ethics certificates from Héma-Québec and INRS

Transmission
An interactive social process
A person ‘transmits’ values or objects to another person who ‘inherits’ them
Transmission can take place in both directions

Forms of the transmission of altruistic values explored in this study
- Direct form
  • Imitation (modeling)
  - Children imitate the altruistic practices of their parents
  - Parent-child discussion
  - Taboo-free discussion on blood donation within families
- Indirect form
  • Arrangement to get involved as a volunteer
  - Transmission of values through practices: young people participating in volunteer activities

Our results point to 2 kinds of families

Family A
Blood donation is ‘part of life’
14 out of the 26 interviewed families
POCD dyad = #
POCD dyad = #
POCD dyad = #

Blood donation has been transmitted within the family for more than one generation
Parents make children aware of it early on by involving them in volunteer blood drive activities
The members of one same family go to a blood drive together
Parents not involved in blood donation bring a sense of value and, a set of values
For the child, becoming aware of the importance of blood donation at a young age influences the desire to become a donor
Blood donation is not a taboo subject
Child donors express their desire to transmit the importance of blood donation to their children and those around them

Family B
Blood donation is defined as an individual act
12 out of the 26 interviewed families
POCD dyad = #
PPOCD dyad = #
PPOCD dyad = #

Blood donation is defined as an individual act
The practice of blood donation is seen as a personal act
Blood donation activities are not immediately associated with family and friends
Certain parent donors act as motivators for their children, all while considering donation as a personal act
Other parents consider that this activity lies outside family activities
In some families, a trace of transmission can be observed in terms of the importance of giving
The children were generally exposed to blood donation as young adults, through blood drives organized in their schools or colleges
Donors were introduced to blood donation by people outside the family (joints of friends, work, school)

Discussion
The transmission of blood donation is not always a direct result of transmission in the family. This can be explained by the fact that even if it is a fundamentally prosocial practice, blood donation is more individual by nature than other prosocial practices. It is also worth noting that even when the choice to donate blood is seen as the result of an individual decision, interviewees’ statements suggest that other influences may have played a significant role, especially thinking about this practice at school and having had an opportunity to donate in a school setting.

Our results therefore suggest the following recommendations:

For type A families
- Organize blood drives as part of ‘Family Days’ that allow blood donation to be a family activity
- Pursue development of a pedagogical kit program in line with blood donation in order to offer elementary and high schools materials so that teachers can make children aware of the cause of blood donation, and in order to enable the organization of blood drives involving student volunteers, thereby encouraging parents to come give blood.

For type B families
- Increase the visibility of blood drives, and if possible permanent collection centres, while emphasizing the freedom of the act of donation. This provides an easy way to add donation to other activities such as shopping, having a coffee, etc.
- Pursue blood drives in higher education institutions so as to interest young adults in blood donation

References

Figure 1
The study was led in Canada in the province of Quebec
Quebec: 7,700,000 residents
1,541,000 km²
14 out of the 26 interviewed families
POCD dyad = #
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