



## **SOUTH AFRICANS URGED TO DONATE BLOOD ON AWARENESS DAY**

Less than 1% of South Africans are regular blood donors; yet according to the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) an estimated eight out of ten people will need blood or some form of blood product during their lives, highlighting the urgent need for more blood donors to come forward.

Ahead of the Blood Donor Awareness Day on Tuesday, 14 June, Dr Dominique Stott, Business Development Executive at PPS, urges all South Africans to undergo this quick and painless procedure that can aid many fellow citizens. “A donor can only give blood every 56 days, and there are far fewer donors than recipients, so blood is always in short supply. However, it is important not to view a donation as a once-off exercise. We need to educate people on the importance of being a regular donor.”

She says that there are no safety concerns from either donating or receiving blood. “Stringent measures ensure that all blood is safe to use. This means that blood cannot be collected from potential donors who are using medication, illegal drugs, had recent illnesses such as malaria, or have had multiple sexual partners.”

“There are no risks associated with donating blood as all the equipment is sterile, used only once and then incinerated after use. Donors are required to complete a questionnaire containing questions relating to their health and social behaviour, as well as undergo a one-on-one interview to confirm the answers, have their iron level, blood pressure and pulse rate checked and finally donate one unit (480ml) of blood.”

Dr Stott says that one unit of blood can be used to save three different lives as it is split into plasma, red blood cells and platelets, all with different uses. While there are some substitutes for plasma (the clear part of blood), there is no substitute for red blood cells, which carry oxygen.

She says that blood may be needed for a number of reasons, including patients undergoing surgery where there is a danger of excessive bleeding such as caesarean sections and organ transplants; patients with cancer and anaemia that may require regular blood transfusions as well as accident victims who have lost a lot of blood. “Many people may not realize this but a regular supply of blood is even more crucial on public holidays and during peak holiday seasons, as there tends to be a higher accident rate at this time of year.”

Dr Stott advises that the entire process takes about 30 minutes and the donor’s body replaces all the fluid within 24 hours through fluid intake, with no health side effects. “The need for blood never stops,

so it is important that we use initiatives such as the Blood Donor Awareness Day to highlight the importance of donating in order to save lives and donate whenever possible.”

There are various locations throughout South Africa in all major provinces for people to donate blood as well as mobile blood donation drives. All dates, locations and further information can be found on the SANBS website at [www.sanbs.org.za](http://www.sanbs.org.za).