

IBTS Research and Development

An Information Booklet for Blood Donors



About this booklet and the IBTS

This booklet is for blood donors interested in learning more about the IBTS's research and development.

At the IBTS, we are responsible for the national blood supply. This includes managing blood products such as red and white blood cells, platelets and plasma.

The booklet explains how we develop research for both blood transfusion and how blood products are prepared. It provides examples of research projects and outlines how we protect your data (information) when using it in our research.

The IBTS carries out research and development to make sure healthcare professionals and researchers use donated blood and tissue in the best possible ways.

We thank you for donating and enabling us to carry out our work.

Types of research and development projects

Our research and development includes:

- **Audits or checks on our services**

Do our services meet international standards?

- **Service evaluation**

What factors impact how we deliver our services?

- **Public Health**

What are the health issues for our donors and what can we learn from them?

- **Health Research**

We try to answer research questions about blood donation, transfusion and related fields. This may involve collecting information or carrying out testing in addition to our everyday services.



IBTS Values

- **Strive for excellence**
Use the minimum information required to complete our audits, service evaluations and address public health concerns.
- **Lead by example**
We are open and transparent in all our research activities. We are accountable for our actions and decisions from the start to the finish of a project.
- **Love our donors**
We respect one another, the research process and hold our donors and the products we work with in the highest regard.
- **Improve patients' lives together**
We work with clinical and academic colleagues to ensure the best research outcomes.



How we protect your data

We will always:

- ✓ Use the minimum information needed to do our work to address public health concerns and complete our service audits and evaluations.
- ✓ Train our staff on data protection and research ethics.
- ✓ Ask for your explicit consent to use your identifiable data in our health research.

Explicit consent means we will fully inform you of how we plan to use any data that could identify you, so you can decide if you want to allow us to use it. You can give consent in writing with a signed consent form or online.

Without your explicit consent we will never:

- ✗ Send your identifiable data or blood products for research purposes outside of the IBTS.
- ✗ Process (use) your identifiable data or blood products within the IBTS for research purposes.
- ✗ Use your genetic information for any purposes, other than those our service needs.

If you have any doubt about how we process your personal information or you want to exercise your data rights, please email our Data Protection Officer at dpo@ibts.ie

How your donation helps us

With your donation and information, we can do the following:

- **Monitor donor behaviours and disease risks**

We monitor trends in donor lifestyle and behaviours to identify and minimise risks to our donors and recipients. We analyse donor laboratory results to get insights into our current donor population, and what is required for matching donor blood with transfusion recipients.

- **Understand the impact of donations on the health of our donors**

We aim to understand how factors like donor nutrition and lifestyle affect who is eligible to give blood. We compare the evidence we find with similar organisations internationally in order to develop our services and improve donor health.

- **Be world experts in blood and tissue testing and production**

We aim to improve the process of donation, testing, and blood production. We look to gain insights into the biological factors such as donor age, blood group or storage conditions that may affect the quality of blood products.

- **Collaborate with clinical research facilities on clinical trials**

We contribute to clinical trials (medical research) to help us ensure the best use of blood products such as platelets and plasma.

- **Continue to monitor blood components and tissue**

This monitoring is known as haemovigilance. It means that we monitor poor reactions to blood donation and transfusion. This helps us limit risks to donors and transfusion recipients.

- **Provide biological material for research**

We provide biological material for researchers. This can include blood parts that can't be used for treatment, and other products of the donation process such as immune cells. These products help advance many types of biological research.

Specific examples of research projects

Below are examples of research projects which show how donations contribute to our work.

Public Health Research:

- Estimate level of antibodies (disease-fighting proteins) in donors' blood. This helps us understand outbreaks of disease, and immune response to infection and vaccination.
- Identify the blood groups, and other blood associated proteins in donors to investigate if there are any specific groups associated with disease risk.
- Contribute to clinical trials which use our products to treat patients.

Service Evaluation:

- Analyse donor health and lifestyle behaviours for trends, such as donor travel or sexual activity.
- Evaluate donor recruitment methods to ensure our donor population reflects the general Irish population.
- Find the best approach to match donor blood groups for people who need multiple transfusions, such as more detailed genetic testing.
- Compare iron levels in donors to evaluate the impact of repeated donation on donor health.
- Evaluate blood components stored under different conditions.

Clinical Audit:

- Review any negative reactions after a transfusion. Review transfusion outcomes in those with rare blood groups, especially during pregnancy.

Legal basis

- Our legal responsibility

We must 'organise, provide, assist or encourage research and the training and teaching of persons in matters relating to blood transfusion and preparation of blood products' (IBTS Statutory Instrument No. 209 of 1988).

- Work in the public interest

We need to process your personal data to perform analyses that are carried out in the public interest to inform Public Health (General Data Protection Regulation Article (GDPR) 6(1)(e)).

For example, to support the COVID-19 pandemic by providing information on infection rates in donors.



- Follow legal definition of personal data

We understand personal data as 'any information relating to an identifiable natural person' [you] (GDPR Article 4(1)). We can legally process personal data to help us with our service audit and evaluation as long as it is anonymised (without any identifying information). We can do this as this data is outside the GDPR.

- Always get your consent when required

We may need to process your personal data for scientific research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2); Health Research Regulation 2018, amendment 2021). We will always ask for your explicit consent in this case.

- Legal surveillance work

When carrying out our services with donors or recipients, we always monitor for any serious or unexpected reactions in donors or recipients (EC Directive 2002/98/EC).



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