

# Info

## Héma-Québec



INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR HÉMA-QUÉBEC PARTNERS, VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

Vol. 6 No. 1 – August 2003

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*You have likely noticed the new look of this newsletter, designed with you in mind. We decided that Héma-Québec's fifth anniversary provided us with an excellent opportunity to spruce up the image of this communications tool.*

*It is hard to believe that it has already been five years since Héma-Québec started operations. September 28, 1998, doesn't seem that long ago, even if so much has happened over the years. I couldn't (or wouldn't even dare) choose a single event that was the most memorable or the one achievement that proved the most significant. But it is clear to me that all the new measures*

*we have implemented to ensure the safety of the blood supply have been extremely valuable for our organization, as well as for donors and recipients. The most recent is the test used to screen for the West Nile Virus, which we will discuss in this newsletter.*

*Although we have every reason to be proud of the road we have taken, we know that we have much further to travel. Today, I would especially like to*



*spotlight the work of Héma-Québec's staff, which numbers 1,300 devoted employees. Together, through the contribution of our professionalism, discipline and enthusiasm, we have hurdled the start-up phase of our young organization. We have developed our know-how by taking advantage of our individual and collective expertise. We have smoothed out the rough edges and overcome problems. We have seen many challenges, and we can be sure that we will see many more.*

*Our commitment is that of a great team to carry out a great mission. We know that donors and recipients count on us each and every day. Their trust, as well as that of our decision-makers, partners and volunteers, is of the utmost importance in the pursuit of our work. This anniversary is the ideal opportunity to thank everyone who has joined us on this great adventure from the bottom of our heart.*

*Dr. Francine Décary*

## Keep an eye out for a first on **September 8...**

Héma-Québec's new blood donation awareness campaign will feature both donors and recipients—a real first, since previous campaigns focussed on recipients. Coinciding with the fifth anniversary of Héma-Québec's founding, this campaign will continue to use touching true testimonials that will help make the public aware that the gift of blood is the gift of life.

This awareness campaign will be broadcast on TV and radio, as well as presented on billboards, throughout the province. It is intended to encourage potential donors to make their first blood donation and increase the frequency at which active donors give blood.

You won't want to miss it!

# A WOMAN OF MERIT!

On April 31 at the National Assembly, Ms. Doris Croteau-Quenneville, one of Héma-Québec's most veteran volunteers, received the Hommage bénévolat-Québec 2003 award, in the "Volunteer in Action" category. Ms. Croteau-Quenneville has spent 20 years as a committed volunteer and more than deserved this acknowledgement.



Generosity, energy, kindness... these are the words that come to mind when thinking about Ms. Croteau-Quenneville. A long-serving volunteer in the mobile clinic network, she has made an impressive number of calls to recruit blood donors (approximately 35,000 calls in 2002 alone, for almost 4% of all calls made that year).

This 78-year-old woman, who has invested countless amounts of time and energy in volunteer work, is an outstanding example of devotion. Héma-Québec would particularly like to pay tribute to Ms. Croteau-Quenneville's exceptional generosity.

A hard-working woman who is never afraid to take on more, Ms. Croteau-Quenneville also works at the blood clinic sites where everyone appreciates her enthusiasm and charming personality. When needed, she acts as group leader during mobile blood donor clinics, supervising a team of 20 volunteers. Seemingly tireless, she also gives her time to the Globule blood donor centre on Côte-Vertu Blvd. in Ville Saint-Laurent and never hesitates to ask for additional work to "fill up her spare time".



Ms. Doris Croteau-Quenneville, veteran Héma-Québec volunteer and winner of the Hommage bénévolat-Québec 2003 award in the "Volunteer in Action" category.

## VOLUNTEERING AT HÉMA-QUÉBEC

Volunteer work is of inestimable value for society. Every day, thousands of men and women help their fellow citizens and, through their contributions, improve their quality of life. For its part alone, Héma-Québec benefits from the generous assistance of more than 25,000 volunteers (organizers, blood donor clinic and telephone recruitment volunteers) who, in various capacities, devote more than one million hours to collecting blood each year.

In addition to this already impressive number, close to 300,000 people volunteer to donate blood.

If you are interested in volunteer work, please call 1-888-666-HEMA, extension 133.

## INFO-DRIVE

To find out where and when blood drives will take place:

**Montréal Area and Western Québec**  
(514) 832-0873 or 1-800-343-SANG (7264)

**Québec City Area and Eastern Québec**  
(418) 650-7230 or 1-800-761-6610

**Customer service (information for donors):**  
1-800-847-2525

Blood drive schedules and results are also posted on our Web site at: [www.hema-quebec.qc.ca](http://www.hema-quebec.qc.ca)

## BLOOD-TYPE COMPATIBILITY

		DONORS							
		O-	O+	B-	B+	A-	A+	AB-	AB+
RECIPIENTS	AB+	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	AB-	●		●		●		●	
	A+	●	●			●	●		
	A-	●				●			
	B+	●	●	●	●				
	B-	●		●					
	O+	●	●						
	O-	●							

If, for example, you are a donor whose blood group is type O-, you are considered a universal donor, since recipients from all blood groups can receive type O- blood. However, as recipient, you can only receive blood given by a type O- donor. Patients generally receive blood donated by persons of the same blood group.

# PUBLIC UMBILICAL CORD BLOOD BANK

## SAVE A LIFE... BY BRINGING IT INTO THE WORLD!

Since the beginning of 2003, Héma-Québec has been working in partnership with Hôpital Sainte-Justine and St. Mary's Hospital to develop a Québec public umbilical cord blood bank program.

The Public Umbilical Cord Blood Bank will serve to improve the treatment available to those suffering from an abnormal functioning of the cells responsible for the manufacture of blood cells (red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets). This situation may result in diseases such as leukemia (cancer of the blood), sickle-cell anemia, bone marrow aplasia (absence of bone marrow function) and other illnesses.

Cord blood will be harvested at Hôpital Sainte-Justine and St. Mary's Hospital, with the permission of the mothers giving birth. As the administrator of the Public Umbilical Cord Blood Bank, Héma-Québec will be responsible for ensuring the quality of the blood harvested through blood tests and tissue typing. Héma-Québec will also be responsible for freezing and storing the cord blood donations that satisfy the selection criteria. At the same time, it will maintain contacts and exchange information with stakeholders at Québec and Canadian hospitals, as well as with international registries, in order to ensure the mutual benefit of all partners and the safety of cord blood supplies.

### For more information

Please contact Ms. Linda Peltier, Héma-Québec's project manager for the development of the Public Umbilical Cord Blood Bank, at 1-888-666-HEMA, extension 336, or send an e-mail to [sangdecordon@hema-quebec.qc.ca](mailto:sangdecordon@hema-quebec.qc.ca).

A fact sheet and a video on cord blood and the procedure for harvesting it are available on the Héma-Québec Web site at [www.hema-quebec.qc.ca](http://www.hema-quebec.qc.ca).



### Trial period

A trial period, intended to verify the procedure for storing cord blood donations and select the appropriate devices and equipment, will begin in September 2003 and continue for approximately six months. During this period, Héma-Québec and its partners count on recruiting 1,500 to 2,000 participants aged 18 and over who plan to give birth at Hôpital Sainte-Justine or St. Mary's Hospital. **None of the cord blood harvested during this phase will be kept.**

This testing phase will serve to ensure the quality of the cord blood when the public bank starts operations in spring 2004. Héma-Québec is also working to obtain accreditation from the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT). This will guarantee the safety and quality of the cord blood and permit international exchanges.

A cord blood transplant is an innovative and beneficial therapeutic option, particularly for young patients for whom a bone marrow donor cannot be found. Moreover, the biological properties of cord blood should enable more non-related transplants to be performed, due to the immaturity of these cells, which require a lesser degree of compatibility between the donor and the recipient. There are 40 public umbilical cord blood banks in the world and, to date, close to 3,000 cord blood transplants have been performed on children.

# CAREER DONORS

## THE ENGINEER AND PLASMA DONATION

Michel Thérien has donated more plasma than any other person in Québec. His career as a donor began when he was 18 years old. "Because, at the time, there was a very great need for plasma, I made my first blood donation in 1966 at the blood donor centre in Québec City. The photos of the great donors hanging on the walls of the centre inspired me," said the engineer from Québec's Ministère de l'Environnement.

The father of a 20-year-old son, Mr. Thérien walks 5 to 10 kilometres every day and watches his diet, avoiding fat. He feels that donating blood is a duty. "When I give blood, I think about those young children who are ill and who need blood components such as platelets and plasma, as well as bone marrow transplants," he recounted. How does he feel after 715 donations? "I look forward to the next!" quickly replied Mr. Thérien, who donates plasma 50 times a year.

Moreover, his commitment has been rewarded. Last year, the International Federation of Blood Donors Organizations gave him its International Merit for Blood award for his career as a blood donor—an honour that he richly deserved!

To find out more about donating plasma, call 1-800-267-9711, extension 232.

## CULTIVATING THE IDEA OF GIVING BLOOD

Ms. Lauriette Houle-Gaumont's first time will remain engraved in her memory forever. Almost 40 years ago, a colleague at work proposed that they go to the blood donor clinic at Eaton's during their lunch break. There, she gave blood for the first time.

A gardening enthusiast, this long-time donor has planted the idea of giving blood in those around her, while sowing her good humour on the numerous occasions she has taken part in mobile blood donor clinics held in Saint-Sauveur, Saint-Lin and at the Optimist Club in Sainte-Sophie. For years, Ms. Houle-Gaumont, a resident of Saint-Calixte, regularly went to the Montreal blood donor centre every Wednesday to donate her gift of life. Her willingness to donate this precious liquid comes from her father, who donated blood over the course of 20 years or so, until he reached the age of 65. Moreover, with the encouragement of Ms. Houle-Gaumont, her cousin, her niece and her niece's son have also become blood donors.

Ms. Lauriette Houle-Gaumont's lengthy blood donor career ended last June, after having made a total of 544 donations, including 225 of plasma. "I felt bad when I realized it would be my last donation," said the 72-year-old woman, who is in excellent shape. She confided to us that her husband was afraid of needles and told her that she was going to drain herself of all her blood. "Giving blood is very good for your health. And it can also help others feel better," she added with a smile.

We tip our hats to such dedication!

Michel Thérien



Lauriette Houle-Gaumont



## TEACHING PEOPLE TO GIVE LIFE

Mr. Richard Fournier, 54 years old, will remember the first time he gave blood his entire life. It was at an outdoor blood donor clinic at Parc Lafontaine in 1967. Approximately 307 donations later, Mr. Fournier believes that “it is our duty to devote a certain amount of ourselves to humanity. Since blood is an irreplaceable resource, we have to act!”

Mr. Fournier has taught geography at Collège Maisonneuve for some 30 years. In addition to giving platelets on numerous occasions, he teaches his students about the importance of giving blood. “Someone has to take up the challenge and young people are sensitive to messages from those who receive blood transfusions,” said this major donor, who has also been responsible for the Collège Maisonneuve blood donor clinic for ten years now.

Present during the interview, the wife of our exemplary donor—who is also a fan of red wine—told us that her husband’s altruism charmed her from the very first time they met. “It happened on the premises of an organization to which he gives a lot of his time. Richard is very socially committed and he is a wonderful model for those around him,” she added.

Stressing his appreciation of the Héma-Québec blood donor clinic employees, he said that they do an exceptional job. “They make giving blood a pleasant experience.” Richard Fournier feels that he is involved in a truly worthwhile undertaking, from which he derives a great deal of satisfaction. He jokingly added that, at heart, he must be a bit of a vampire. Another example to follow.

Richard Fournier



## ON THE DONOR ROAD

Starting June 2 and continuing to September 7, Héma-Québec is making its way throughout the length and breadth of Québec, so as to enable the entire population to “Stop and make a gift of life” during vacation season.

This summer, we're on the way!



In fact, during the course of these 14 weeks, Héma-Québec plans on welcoming no less than 91,000 donors at approximately 500 mobile blood clinics. To do this, Héma-Québec will take to the road to meet donors where they will be found during the summer season.

Over the first seven weeks, Héma-Québec, with the help of community partners, welcomed some 42,000 blood donors at 280 mobile clinics organized throughout the province. From now until September 7, when the summer campaign ends, more than 7,000 individuals are expected to give blood each week.

The purpose of this undertaking is, as always, to meet the blood component needs of the Québec public. Giving blood means giving life. Remember that a single gift of blood can, within 60 minutes, help save up to four lives!

## RH NEGATIVE PROGRAM REWARDED

At the 13th edition of the Flèche d’or competition, Héma-Québec was honoured in the non-profit organization category for its direct marketing campaign, “Being negative is positive”, which was designed by Olive Communication. Presented by the Association du marketing direct et de la relation clientèle (AMDRC), the Flèche d’or award acknowledges excellence in the fields of direct marketing, customer contact centres and interactive marketing.

Launched in September 2002, this campaign designed to reactivate donors of Rh negative blood and to generate their loyalty is intended to increase the frequency at which this particular type of donor gives blood. The strategy used combines raising awareness with providing an opportunity to give blood.

To date, this major marketing operation has had positive results. In fact, more than 22% of the donors canvassed joined the Rh negative program by making a commitment to give an additional blood donation over the coming year—and slightly more than one inactive donor out of ten became active once again.

## WEST NILE VIRUS

# MEASURES INSTITUTED BY HÉMA-QUÉBEC

Héma-Québec now tests all blood donations for the presence of the West Nile Virus (WNV).

As a result of the efforts of the Research and Development group, an in-house test has been developed to detect the presence of the WNV in the blood of donors. This PCR test has been used, since June 16, on all blood donated in the Québec City area and eastern Québec and as of June 18, 2003 in Montréal and western Québec. Following this, on June 25, Héma-Québec implemented a commercial test developed by Roche Diagnostics. This test has been added to the range of highly precise screening tests deployed by Héma-Québec to ensure a safe blood supply for Québec.

In addition to this test, Héma-Québec has instituted other measures to ensure the safety of the blood supply. At the beginning of the summer, 55% of blood donor clinics were held outside the areas where human cases of WNV were identified last summer, despite the fact that the use of



larvicides in high-risk zones should lead to a significant reduction in the number of mosquitoes and, therefore, in the risk of WNV transmission. Moreover, from January to June 2003, Héma-Québec stockpiled frozen plasma products that are safe to use, since they were collected at a time when the virus was not in circulation among humans.

Following the example of other blood suppliers in North America, Héma-Québec nurses will also ask all those donating blood an additional question, in order to determine whether they have experienced a combination of fever and headache in the previous seven days.

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**Héma-Québec has also set up a special telephone hotline, 1-877-VNO-HÉMA (1-877-866-4362), for questions about the effects of the WNV on blood.**

## LIVING A SATISFYING EXPERIENCE IN A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

As one of its priority projects, Héma-Québec has set up a major program entitled "Blood Donation Positive Experience" (BDPE). The purpose is to improve the preparation and perceptions of blood donors, partners and employees so that everyone will have a satisfying experience in a better environment. Through a complete redesign of the blood donor clinic process, Héma-Québec hopes to increase both donor loyalty and the frequency of donations.

Therefore, by the end of the 2003–2004 year, during one or the other of the 2,500 blood donor clinics—the very heart of the organization's activities—that are organized each year, the results of long months of work will become apparent. More than a simple remodelling, we will witness an in-depth revision! It should be noted that this major roll-out will coincide with the fifth anniversary of the founding of Héma-Québec.

Through a series of measures, including the modernization of facilities and equipment, the enhancement of service outlets

and the improvement of the blood donation process, the BDPE is intended to give new wings to the core element of Héma-Québec activities: customer service. Thus, giving blood will become an even

more positive experience for all those who play a role in the process. In addition to enjoying the privilege of saving lives, from now on donors will benefit from an environment and service that are better suited to their needs.

Finally, we should point out that, as a result of this ambitious project, Mr. Jacques Blais, Director of Marketing and Development, was honoured at the 12th edition of the "Personnalité Marketing 2003" gala, which took place on April 29. In fact, he received the "Stratège" award in the cultural or non-profit organization marketing category for the excellence of his work and that of the BDPE project team. He was also crowned "marketing personality" for 2003.

**BDPE**  
BLOOD DONATION  
POSITIVE  
EXPERIENCE

## HÉMA-QUÉBEC ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING STABLE PRODUCTS

On April 1, Héma-Québec officially implemented the stable product information system (SPIS), one of its priority projects, which will enable it to obtain stable products directly from suppliers.

Previously administered by Canadian Blood Services, the supply and management of stable products will now be entirely under the control of Héma-Québec.

This major accomplishment, which required several months of work and planning, will make the process for managing stable products as efficient as possible. Furthermore, it will improve the availability of these products for hospitals. The implementation of the SPIS is an important step in fulfilling Héma-Québec's mission to be the North American leader in its field by 2005.

## A FEW FACTS about stable products

Stable products can be obtained through two distinct processes:

- by extracting various proteins from plasma fractionation
- by using recombinant manufacturing techniques requiring little or no plasma

The family of stable products includes therapeutic proteins that are used, among other things, to treat people suffering from coagulation disorders and those who are immunosuppressed (deficient antibody production). For example, FVIII and Factor IX are used to treat hemophiliacs.

The family of stable products also includes a vast range of immunoglobulins: the IGIVs used in neurology, immunology or bone marrow transplants, and the anti-hepatitis B immunoglobulin, used to treat and prevent the hepatitis B virus.

Finally, the value of the stable products distributed to hospitals throughout Québec accounts for more than half of Héma-Québec's budget.

## ADDITION OF A NEW HEPATITIS B TEST

Since April 7, Héma-Québec has been submitting all allogeneic blood donations to a test to detect antibodies directed against the antigen of the nucleoid of the hepatitis B virus (anti-HBc). Only autogenous donations are not subjected to this test. Using the ELISA technique, this test is used in conjunction with the hepatitis B surface antigen test (HBsAg).

Until now, screening for hepatitis B virus infection in blood donors was based on the surface antigen (HBsAg) test. However, in certain cases, chronically infected individuals have HBsAg levels that are below the detection threshold. In the case of these individuals, a positive test for anti-HBc is often the only serological indication of infection.

Héma-Québec is the first blood products supplier in Canada to use the anti-HBc test.

## 2002-2003 STATISTICS



From April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003

**BLOOD DRIVES: 2,884**

### NUMBER OF DONORS

Montréal:	197,743
Québec:	103,678
Total:	301,421

### DONATIONS

Total number of units:	250,861
New donors:	24,002

### PRODUCTS DELIVERED TO HOSPITALS

Packed red blood cells:	221,659
Platelets:	107,612
Platelets from thrombapheresis:	4,234
Plasma:	39,324
Plasmapheresis:	8,200
Cryoprecipitate:	12,685
Cryoprecipitate supernatants:	6,593

# HÉMA-QUÉBEC ON THE UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL CAMPUS

June 4 saw the unveiling of a model of the new centre that will house Héma-Québec on the Université Laval campus.

This building, built by the Merlin-Pomerleau consortium at a cost of \$13,935,000 will house all of the corporation's activities in the Québec City region. The Université Laval transferred, by means of a 30-year emphyteutic lease, a piece of land measuring 7,300 square metres located to the southwest of the Ferdinand-Vandry pavilion.

The building will house the approximately 400 Héma-Québec employees who work in Québec City, including the Research and Development group, which is working on developing new technologies and products to meet the needs of the Québec health system; the Histo-Québec group, whose primary mission is to make the public aware of the importance of donating human tissue; and the group responsible for processing blood products and blood substitutes.



"Héma-Québec's presence on the campus will increase the critical mass of our biotechnological research, in addition to contributing to the training of our interns in a highly regulated industrial environment," said the rector of Université Laval, Mr. Claude Pigeon, at the press conference announcing this initiative. "Moreover, Héma-Québec will help support our research and its presence on our campus will increase awareness of Université Laval among blood donors," he added. Héma-Québec's researchers already have a close working relationship with their colleagues in the University's Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology. Six Héma-Québec employees are also professors associated with the University.

Construction on the multidisciplinary building, which started in April 2003, should be completed in December 2003. It involves a modern three-storey building built with glass panels in which internal circulation will move around an atrium that will stand the full height of the building, with usable space of 6,200 square metres. An underground parking area for some 50 vehicles will complete the structure.

"This project demonstrates our commitment to ensure Héma-Québec's active presence within the Greater Québec City community and to concentrate our research and development activities there," said Mr. Claude Pichette, Chairman of the Héma-Québec Board of Directors. "This relationship with Université Laval, which we see as long term, is the realization of a synergy developed over the years through research projects for which we both have a passion," he concluded.

## Info Héma-Québec

is published by Héma-Québec's Public Affairs division, under the responsibility of Mr. André Roch, Assistant to the Executive Director, Public Affairs

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Printing: 15,000 copies

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