



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on April 12, 2011

U.K. to Allow Homosexual Men to Donate Blood

Homosexual men in the U.K. will soon be allowed to donate blood. It's a policy shift that likely will increase the fear of contracting HIV through the transfusion of tainted blood. According to an article published in *The Telegraph*:

"The ban on gay men donating blood is being lifted because it was decided that the rule could be discriminatory and might breach equality legislation."

There are restrictions on the ability of homosexuals to give blood, however. For example, homosexual men will only be permitted to donate if they have remained celibate for the last ten years. Any potential donor who admits to having engaged in sexual intercourse in the past decade will still be barred under the new scheme.

Anne Milton, the public health minister, will announce the radical change within the next few weeks. She will reportedly be supported by Andrew Lansley, the Health Secretary, and Lynne Featherstone, the Equalities Minister.

Despite the understandable concern among the citizenry of the specter of an increase in tainted blood, all blood donated in the U.K. is screened for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. In fairness, however, there are always a small number of diseases that evade detection and find their way into the blood supply. Should any HIV infected fluid be negligently permitted to be transfused into a recipient, the legal ramifications will be immeasurable.

A frightening aspect of the methods presently employed to protect the available supply of healthy blood is revealed in a comment from the article in *The Telegraph* cited above.

The current system is based on trust. There are no checks to ensure donors are telling the truth about their sexuality and around seven per cent of sexually active gay men are thought to give blood despite the ban.

The new guidelines were promulgated by SABTO, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs. The Committee reasoned that if the outright ban were lifted and replaced with a less restrictive rule that would prohibit homosexual men from giving blood for five years after having sex with another man, the risk of HIV reaching the blood supply would go up by less than 5 percent.

In further deliberations, it was decided that if five years was good, ten years was better. This was the time frame that is incorporated into the new standard.

The size of the population infected with HIV in the U.K. is estimated to be about 86,500, about 25 percent of whom do not know they are infected. Of those afflicted with the diseases, about 42 percent are homosexual men.





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As one would expect, homosexual rights advocacy groups are praising the decision by the British government. They insist that many in the homosexual community are “in long-term monogamous relationships, practise [sic] safe sex or have been celibate for years.”

However, a [report](#) to the contrary was published recently by the Family Research Council wherein it was revealed that

The 2003-2004 Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census surveyed the lifestyles of 7,862 homosexuals. Of those involved in a “current relationship,” only 15 percent describe their current relationship as having lasted twelve years or longer, with five percent lasting more than twenty years.[4] While this “snapshot in time” is not an absolute predictor of the length of homosexual relationships, it does indicate that few homosexual relationships achieve the longevity common in marriages.

Although the plan being proposed in the U.K. may sound radical and may rightly disturb many in those nations, similar restrictions in the United States are being challenged, as well.

Witness the events held recently at the Residence Halls Association (RHA) of Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. The RHA held a blood drive where donors could simultaneously give blood and voice their opposition to a ban on homosexual performing the same activity.

As [reported](#) by the school newspaper:

The Red Cross is partnering with RHA to hold the drive. Monica Stoneking, Great Lakes Region communications manager for the Red Cross, said the Middlebury Model is a type of blood drive that serves as a response by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to a federal ban.

The ban, enforced by the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, prohibits sexually active homosexual men from donating blood anytime during their lives, she said.

‘We don’t like that discrimination,’ she said. ‘Obviously, the gay and lesbian communities don’t like that discrimination. We’ve been working with them to incorporate everybody and make everyone feel welcome.’

Stoneking said the ban’s lifelong policy is unfair for homosexual men.

‘There’s not enough research to support having that lifetime ban,’ she said. ‘We’re trying to get it as a deferral period like for those that travel to a Malaria-ridden country. We’re trying to lift that so it’s a year deferral.’

As indicated above, the research in the U.K. suggests that a five-year ban increases the risk of HIV-tainted blood entering the nation’s supply by 5 percent. While the British government apparently deems that increase as negligible and worth the risk to its citizens, there is no debating that such a risk is actually present and that to deny that science is placing policy above probity.



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