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Contents

8

Hope, Education and Advocacy in a Maze of Reimbursement Challenges

How the blood community is managing longtime struggles in the coding and reimbursement of blood products

12

Your Data is Valuable; Can You Protect it From Cyber Threats?

17

Quality Management in the Blood Industry

A Q&A With Mary Beth Bassett

COLUMNS & INTERVIEWS

President’s Message
2  Navigating the Challenges of a Changing Blood Industry

NBF: Shaping the Industry
4  2018 NBF CORD Summit: Examining the Sociological Shift From Older to Younger Donors

In the Field
6  Bloodworks Northwest Expanding by Commercializing Research and Analysis

White Coats
24  We Need a Rapid Consolidation of Blood Centers

DEPARTMENTS

20  Significant Findings
26  PEP Talk
27  Of Note
28  Calendar
The business of blood is changing on a number of fronts. Reimbursement coding is getting increasingly complex and it’s more critical than ever for blood centers and transfusion services to stay on top of changes that can impact their bottom line.

The first feature article in this issue of AABB News, which begins on page 8, describes some of the challenges the blood industry faces when it comes to regulations for coding and reimbursement of blood products. In some ways, the payment methodology lags behind that of other medical fields and often fails to take into account new approaches — like pathogen reduction technologies — that are expensive to develop and take a long time to be reimbursed.

Another new issue that our industry is just beginning to grapple with is cybersecurity. Keeping patient data protected should be a top goal for all blood establishments. Beginning on page 12, our second feature details the threats and some of the steps that blood centers and transfusion services are taking to keep this data away from would-be cyber thieves.

Concluding My Presidency

This will be my final issue of AABB News as president of our Association. I can’t thank my colleagues on the Board, the AABB staff and, most importantly, you — our membership and raison d’être — enough for the work we have accomplished during this year. The year has positively flown by, and it has been a great pleasure and an honor to serve AABB and our members in this capacity.

At the AABB Business Meeting and Closing Luncheon, on Tuesday, Oct. 17 from 12:45-2:00 pm, I will literally and figuratively hand the president’s gavel to Michael Murphy, who has been very involved with AABB since 1990. A professor of transfusion medicine at the University of Oxford in England, Dr. Murphy currently serves as a hematology consultant to the British National Health Service Blood and Transplant and the Department of Hematology at the Oxford University Hospitals. I think it would be an understatement to say that I’m leaving the presidency in very capable hands. I will continue to serve in the role of past president and, of course, support Mike in his role of president. ■

Mary Beth Bassett, BS, MT(ASCP) AABB President
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The 2018 National Blood Foundation’s Council on Research and Development (CORD) hosted a number of experts on changes in donor populations to discuss what that means for the blood industry. Research shows that older and younger donors differ in their charitable giving behaviors. The Mature (or Silent) Generation — those born from 1925-1945 — and the Baby Boomers, usually considered those born between 1946 and 1964, typically give almost 25% more to charities than do those in younger generations, including Generation X (those born from 1965-1976), the Millennials — or Generation Y — born between 1977 and 1995, and Generation Z, also called the Centennials or iGen, which includes those born from 1996 through the present.

Speakers at the NBF CORD Summit discussed the differences in these two cohorts and what we might expect to see in the future.

Merlyn Sayers, MBBCh, PhD, gave a presentation, “Civil Disengagement and the Sustainability of the Blood Supply.” Sayers is the president and CEO of Carter BloodCare, headquartered in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. He also serves on the faculty of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. He has previously served as vice chair of the Washington State Board of Health, chairman of the FDA’s Blood Products Advisory Committee (BPAC), a member on the Health and Human Services Blood Safety and Availability Committee and president of America’s Blood Centers, recently winning ABC’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Eva-Maria Merz, PhD, gave a presentation titled “Who Gives Life? Changes in (blood) Donor Behaviour Across Different Age Groups.” An associate professor in the sociology department at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Merz heads the Donor Behaviour research line at Sanquin. With her multidisciplinary background in sociology and developmental psychology, Merz combines her theoretical and quantitative expertise to study how donor behavior is influenced by personal and social networks.

Mario Macis, PhD, discussed “The Economics and Ethics of Blood and Plasma Donor Compensation.” Macis is an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Carey Business School, an associate faculty member at the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality at JHU Medicine, and a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research. Macis’s research focuses on incentives, prosocial behavior, morally controversial transactions and global health.

Although nobody can foresee the future, these experts succeeded in providing some insight into the likely behavior of future donors and how the blood industry can best encourage their engagement.