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Saving more lives with every drop

New blood collection process can custom-tailor donations

BY LIZ COBBS
News Staff Reporter

Ann Arbor resident Kyle Pleger seemed pretty relaxed sitting in a large, maize-and-blue-colored recliner as he donated blood.

The blood from his left arm flowed through a tube and into a machine.

A laptop computer with wireless Internet access was placed on an elevated stand within his reach, but he didn't want to use it to surf the Net or watch a DVD.

Donating blood to the Red Cross is nothing new for Pleger, who said he's done it on a regular basis for at least five years.

What's different this time, though, is that Pleger is "supersizing" his donation through new, automated technology at the Ann Arbor Trima Donor Center.

"It's just as easy for me to donate this way as it is the other," Pleger, a self-employed information systems specialist, said Wednesday. "But this way is better for the people who need blood than for the donor who's giving blood."

Detroit and local Red Cross officials are excited about the automated Trima ("tree-mah") technology, calling it "the 21st century way to donate blood."

"If you're a career blood donor, Trima is the next step in your career," said Bill Davey, automated collections director of the Red Cross' Southeastern Michigan Blood Region. "Trima gives donors another choice of how to donate blood. It optimizes each of their blood donations and helps to save more lives."

In the traditional whole blood donation process, equal parts of red blood cells, platelets and plasma are collected.

The Trima method can simultaneously collect and separate all three blood components. The automated machine can also "custom-tailor" a donation by collecting a specific component that's needed, such as platelets, and return the remaining components back to the donor.

According to the ARC, it takes six donors to produce one unit of transfusable platelets. With Trima technology, a single donor can give one unit of transfusable platelets.

Platelets are important for blood clotting and for cancer therapy, open-heart surgery, blood disorders and organ transplants.

Dr. Robertson Davenport, director of the University of Michigan Health System's Blood Bank and Transfusion Services, welcomed the automated technology, saying it's come at a critical time.

"We're getting involved in more transplants and sophisticated surgeries and we have an increasing need for platelets," Davenport said Tuesday at the public launching of the new maize-and-blue themed center at 514 E. Washington St., between Division and State streets.

Red Cross officials say they hope to tap into the U-M student population and the business community in downtown Ann Arbor. Trima centers are also located in Detroit, Livonia, Riverview and Bloomfield Hills.

Davey said the Ann Arbor center is the first fully automated Red Cross blood center to serve donors near a major university campus. The center has four reclining chairs, each with its



Nurse Sally Williams of Plymouth talks with Kyle Pleger of Ann Arbor as he donates blood at the American Red Cross Ann Arbor Trima Donor Center in Ann Arbor Wednesday.

ALAN WARREN, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

own laptop computer that donors can use while giving blood. The Trima machines are located next to each chair.

When the Washtenaw County Chapter's new donor center opens later this fall, there will be 10 donation stations and four of the stations will have Trima equipment, said Pam Horiszny, the local chapter's executive director.

The donation center will also be equipped with technology that can double red blood cell collection, allowing two units of red blood cells from one donation, Horiszny said. Red blood cells are most needed after significant blood loss through trauma, surgery or anemia.

The local chapter has built a new \$6 million facility, that includes a blood donation center, at 4700 Packard Road, between Carpenter and Golfside roads. A move-in date is targeted for late October.

According to local Red Cross statistics, Washtenaw County residents donated a total of 27,292 pints of blood from 2002-'03 and 796 blood drives were

Where to give

Trima is a fully automated way to donate blood and maximize combinations of all three blood components – platelets, plasma and red cells.

The American Red Cross has officially opened the Ann Arbor Trima Donor Center at 514 E. Washington St., between Division and State streets. The center is open on Wednesday, Thursday and

Saturday. Donations are by appointment only.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (866)-TRY-TRIMA.

Traditional blood donations can still be made at the local American Red Cross Blood Donor Center at 2725 Packard Road. For more information, call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE.

held during that same period.

Diane E. Ward, CEO of the American Red Cross Southeastern Michigan Blood Services Region in Detroit, said the center has been open since June but the Red Cross wanted to hold off publicizing it until students came back to school.

The Southeastern Michigan Blood Services Region handles donor collections in Washtenaw, Wayne, Macomb, St. Clair, and Oakland counties. So far, 88 people have donated at the Ann Arbor center since the doors

opened. The goal, Ward said, is to get 500 donors at the center by year's end.

"We hope to get 1,000 donors once the new chapter opens," Ward said. "If any population can do it, we know Ann Arbor can."

Horiszny agrees, saying nationally, 5 percent of Americans give blood, but around 9 percent of Washtenaw County residents donate blood.

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