

Hello. This is Tom Schallert from the Northern California Community Blood Bank with a community comment.

Last year on KINS, I provided comments regarding a project in Nigeria worked on by your blood bank, with several other blood banks in Northern California, the Rotary Club of Eureka, Rotary Clubs from Nigeria, Global Healing and Safe Blood Africa Project.

The project first began with the idea to provide a blood bank refrigerator for storage of safe volunteer blood at hospitals in Nigeria. It sounded great but I asked, "how are the blood bank refrigerators going to be filled with volunteer blood?" It was determined an assessment trip was needed and a team went to Nigeria in May, 2010.

Our team determined there was great need as well as enthusiasm and desire for education by our Nigerian transfusion medicine colleagues. We determined efforts should be made to assist and educate and I have recently returned from the very first Transfusion Medicine Training Workshop conducted at the Uyo University Teaching Hospital in Uyo, Nigeria.

There is a great deal of knowledge and skill in transfusion medicine in Nigeria. Physicians, Lab Scientists, Administrators, and Nurses generally know what to do.

However, there are only a few donor recruiters in the entire country of 150 million and this is where they fall short. There is little or no investment in this important aspect of transfusion medicine and blood donor recruitment is critical to having a safe and adequate blood supply.

We had heard Nigerians will not give voluntarily but our team proved to them that Nigerians will give blood when asked, demonstrated by our organizing three highly successful blood drives with the Muslim University Student Association, a Nigerian Youth Corp and the Akwa Ibom Church. Hundreds of volunteer donations were made proving a properly organized approach made to groups and individuals, results in donors giving blood, no matter where they live or what their culture.

This lack of investment in donor recruitment, primarily from a lack of knowledge of the importance, has caused canceled surgeries, babies to die of malaria anemia, mothers dying in childbirth, accident victims dying from their injuries. A

quarter million or more Nigerians die each year because safe volunteer blood is not available to them.

I spent three weeks training trainers, training recruiters and Administrators on aspects of Donor Management. Others on the team trained Lab Scientists, Physicians, and Nurses regarding appropriate transfusion practices.

It was a successful program and we believe our efforts will be fruitful and appropriate investments will be made so that when a team does follow up later this year, we will have seen success and the opportunity to duplicate the program.

I am often asked why the Northern California Community Blood Bank working with the Rotary Club of Eureka is involved in such a far away project. It is rather simple.

We have had great success and support here in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Our blood supply is generally available and very safe. We have expertise and this expertise is needed and can have a dramatic impact in saving lives in Nigeria. So our boards say, "Since we can do this, we must do this."

It has been an honor to be involved representing both Northern California Community Blood Bank and the Rotary Club of Eureka.

This has been Tom Schallert, with a community comment.