

Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice towards Blood Donation among Undergraduate Medical Students– A Cross-Sectional Study in Baghdad City- Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Blood donation is a global voluntary practice that supplies whole blood or blood components to patients as an essential medical intervention. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude toward blood donation among medical college students in Baghdad city, Iraq. A cross-sectional study was conducted at Al-Kindy College of Medicine, University of Baghdad, from September 2023 to May 2024. The study was carried out using an online Google Form questionnaire that included one part targeting the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants and a second part comprising questions regarding knowledge, attitude, and blood donation practice. The study involved 354 medical student participants; 236 (66.7%) were females and 118 (33.3%) were males ($P = 0.000$). Most medical students, 253 (71.5%), had good information about blood donation, and 314 (88.7%) had knowledge about blood groups ($P = 0.000$), mainly through online internet and social media, 165 (46.6%) ($P = 0.000$). More than two-thirds of the participants, 331 (93.5%) ($P = 0.000$), were aware of blood donation. However, only 13% of them had donated blood. Medical causes were reported as a barrier to blood donation by 23.2% of participants, and the most suitable place for donation was the blood bank, reported by 203 (57.3%) ($P = 0.000$). A total of 332 (93.8%) ($P = 0.000$) of participants showed a positive attitude toward blood donation. A considerable proportion of undergraduate medical students had insufficient knowledge about blood donation, while their attitude and awareness were satisfactory.

Keywords: Blood; donation; students.

INTRODUCTION

Blood donation is defined as an autologous voluntary standard practice used in urgent and elective general or maxillofacial surgery, trauma, chronic illnesses, pregnancy, road traffic accidents, and cancer to save patients' lives (1). Awareness of blood group systems, particularly ABO, is essential not only for safe blood donation but also due to emerging evidence linking ABO

blood groups with COVID-19 severity (2). There is a significant difference in the accessibility of blood among low-, middle-, and high-income countries (3). Moreover, there is a wide gap between the demand and supply of blood, and many countries do not have sufficient blood to meet their needs (4). Many patients are saved through blood transfusions, while insufficient provision of blood bags and blood itself leads to the death of many patients, especially in developing countries (5).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares that blood is a gift of life due to its short storage time and recommends that about three to five percent of healthy people aged more than seventeen years should donate

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Received: 13/11/2024 Accepted: 16/1/2025.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35516/jjps.v19i1.3634>

blood at least twice per year (6). Medical students represent an important segment of the community for enrollment in voluntary blood donation to ensure a safe and adequate blood supply for blood banks (7). Many factors affect blood donation and differ from one country to another, including education, academic year, knowledge, attitude, blood donation practice, age, gender, family education, fear of illnesses such as anemia, anxiety, stress, shortage of blood bags, and remoteness of blood banks (8,9). Many studies have shown that the most important factor is a lack of information and knowledge concerning blood donation (10).

Adequate knowledge and a positive attitude toward blood donation lead to good voluntary blood donation practices, while limited knowledge promotes poor donation practices. This highlights the need to increase awareness about blood donation through government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and health agencies (11,12). In the future, medical students will play a leading role in raising awareness and encouraging blood donation within their communities by planning and implementing suitable strategies to improve blood donation practices (13).

Therefore, this study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude toward blood donation among medical college students in Baghdad city, Iraq.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted at the governmental Al-Kindy College of Medicine, University of Baghdad, from September 2023 to May 2024. The inclusion criteria were current medical college students from different academic stages, while the exclusion criteria included teachers and administrators. This study was approved by the Scientific and Ethical Committee of Al-Kindy Medical College, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq (Approval Number: 10, dated 13-10-2024) (Appendix 1).

The study was conducted using an online Google Form

questionnaire (Appendix 2) distributed through various social media platforms and electronic classrooms. The questionnaire was adopted from previous research (12) (Appendix 1) and included two parts. The first part addressed independent sociodemographic variables of the participants (age, gender, academic year, and address). The second part included questions related to dependent variables (knowledge, attitude, and blood donation practice).

These variables were assessed using different questions, including awareness or knowledge of blood donation, source of awareness, previous blood donation, place of donation, reasons for not donating blood, barriers to blood donation, and external motivation for blood donation. A “yes” response was given for positive answers and “no” for negative answers. Other questions were assessed using multiple-choice options. Adequate explanation regarding the purpose of the study was provided to all participants. The questionnaire was pilot-tested before use in the main study to identify any ambiguities. Content validity was reviewed by experts in the field to ensure that the questionnaire covered relevant concepts. The questionnaire was developed specifically for the current study.

Statistical Analysis

Data were collected using Microsoft Office Excel 2013 and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate frequencies and percentages for categorical variables. The level of significance was determined using the chi-square test in bivariate analysis. Odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were reported. A P-value ≤ 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Of the 354 medical student participants in this study, the sample size was chosen based on a calculation aiming for a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ at a 95% confidence level.

Among them, 184 (52%) were aged 20 years or below, 236 (66.7%) were females, and 118 (33.3%) were males (P = 0.000). Most participants were in the second educational level of the medical college, 184 (52%). The majority of participants were from Baghdad province, 331 (93.5%) (P = 0.000) (Table 1).

Most medical students, 253 (71.5%) (P = 0.000) (OR = 6.2748) (95% CI = 4.5280 to 8.6954), had good information about blood donation, and 314 (88.7%) (P = 0.000) had knowledge about blood groups. Sources of information included online internet and social media, 165 (46.6%) (P = 0.000), campaigns, 90 (25.4%), family, 86 (24.3%), and friends, 13 (3.7%).

According to the results of this research, more than two-thirds of the participants, 331 (93.5%) (P = 0.000), were aware of blood donation and where to donate, with 292 (82.5%) knowing the appropriate donation locations. The most suitable place for donation was the blood bank, reported by 203 (57.3%) (P = 0.000). Additionally, 332 (93.8%) (P = 0.000) (OR = 227.7355) (95% CI = 123.7121

to 419.2273) showed a positive attitude toward blood donation. Nevertheless, only 46 (13%) (P = 0.000) of the total medical students donated blood voluntarily (Table 2).

Most medical students did not donate blood, 308 (87%) (OR = 44.8318) (95% CI = 28.9269 to 69.4816). The main barriers to blood donation were medical causes, 82 (23.2%), fear of infectious diseases, 75 (21.2%), and the least common barrier was refusal by family or parents, 10 (2.8%) (P = 0.000). However, the most common reasons for not donating blood were that no one had asked them to donate, 153 (43.2%), lack of consideration of donation, 100 (28.2%), and the least common reason was not knowing a place for donation, 21 (5.9%) (P = 0.000).

Thus, the main motivations for blood donation were exposure through internet and social media, 89 (25.1%), followed by donation for relatives and friends, 73 (20.6%), widespread information about donation, 62 (17.5%), and the least motivating factor was donation centers within the faculty, 14 (4%) (P = 0.000), as shown in Table 3.

Table-1- The Demographic characteristics and knowledge of medical students.

variables	Categories	No.	%	P-value	95% Confidence interval
Age	less than 20 years	184	52	0.2928	0.8723 to 1.5733
	more than 20 years	170	48		
Sex	Females	236	66.7	0.000	2.9264 to 5.4675
	Males	118	33.3		
Address	From Baghdad	280	79.1	0.000	9.9656 to 20.5684
	From other provinces	74	20.9		
Knowledge about blood group	Yes	314	88.7	0.000	38.6938 to 98.1380
	No	40	11.3		
Academic medical year	First year	2	0.6	0.000	
	Second year	184	52		
	Third year	166	46.9		
	Fourth year	2	0.6		

Table-2- Knowledge, attitude, and awareness of medical students about blood donation.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Odd ratio	95% CI	P- value
Knowledge about blood donation	Good	253	71.5	6.2748	4.5280 to 8.6954	0.000
	Poor	101	28.5			
Attitude towards blood donation	Positive	332	93.8	227.7355	123.7121 to 419.2273	0.000
	Negative	22	6.2			
Aware or know of blood donation	Yes	331	93.5	207.1096	113.9241 to 376.5174	0.000
	No	23	6.5			
Aware of where to donate blood	Yes	292	82.5	22.1811	15.0539 to 32.6825	0.000
	No	62	17.5			
Source of awareness	Internet social media	165	46.6	0.000		
	Awareness campaigns	90	25.4			
	Family	86	24.3			
	Friends	13	3.7			

Table-3- Distribution of responses of medical students regarding blood donation practice.

Variables	Categories	No.	%	Odd ratio	95% CI	P- value
Have you ever donated blood	No	308	87	44.8318	28.9269 to 69.4816	0.000
	Yes	46	13			
Place of donation	Blood bank	203	57.3	P-value =0.000		
	Health institution	100	28.2			
	Blood donation campaigns	51	14.4			
Causes that don't donate blood	No body asked me to donate	153	43.2	P-value =0.000		
	No thinking about donation	100	28.2			
	Lack of time	53	15			
	Limit information about donation not know where to donate	27	7.6			
	Not knowing where to donate	21	5.9			
Barriers to blood donation	Medical cause	82	23.2	P-value =0.000		
	Engaged in risky diseases	75	21.2			
	distrust in the sterility of the equipment	42	11.9			
	Fear of blood lose that weaken the body	29	8.2			
	Having tattoo	18	5.1			
	Piercing	6	1.7			
	Acupuncture	6	1.7			
	My parents told me not to donate	10	2.8			
	Fear of procedure	7	2			
	Belief that blood is sold	4	1.1			
External Motivation for blood donation	Getting information from internet social media	89	25.1	P-value =0.000		
	Donation to some body I know	73	20.6			
	Getting detailed information about procedure	62	17.5			
	Catastrophe that needs donation	60	16.9			
	One day , I am already being a donor	38	10.7			
	Discovering that famous people donate blood	18	5.1			
	Donation availability at my university	14	4			

DISCUSSION

Knowledge of how critical blood donation is and its crucial role in saving patients' lives can motivate and encourage individuals to donate. Many people may not realize or understand the extent of the shortage of blood supplies, especially for certain blood types like O-negative or during emergency cases. Understanding the role blood donation plays in medical treatments, surgeries, cancer care, and trauma can encourage more people to become regular donors, especially when they know that it can decrease iron overload and reduce the risk of heart diseases.

Lack of knowledge or misinformation about the blood donation process exists due to different barriers such as fear of pain (8.2%), complications from donation, and medical causes (28.2%). Educating potential donors through educational campaigns about the safety of the process, the minimal risks involved, and how blood is collected and tested can reduce anxiety and increase willingness to donate. Misinformation about blood donation, such as common myths that donating blood will make a person weak or that donating blood is dangerous, can discourage people from donating. These misconceptions can be addressed through educational campaigns showing that the process is safe and minimally invasive.

Many individuals are unsure whether they are eligible to donate or may misunderstand the eligibility criteria, such as age, health status, weight, lifestyle, and medication use. Educating people about the eligibility criteria for blood donation can remove this barrier. Research has demonstrated that active blood donors who share their experiences and knowledge with others can influence donation rates. Students who are educated about blood donation by peer leaders are often more likely to donate themselves.

Cultural, religious, and societal norms can also play a role in blood donation. In some cultures, people may have reservations or misconceptions about donating blood,

particularly related to religious beliefs or traditional practices. Individuals who have accurate information and knowledge about the importance of blood donation and its positive effects may feel more empowered to donate. Understanding the direct emotional impact of their donation on others' lives can give donors a sense of purpose and fulfillment, especially when families express gratitude for donated blood.

Despite most students having a positive attitude toward blood donation, blood donation practice was very low among them. Age was found to be significantly associated with blood donation practice because extreme age groups and sick individuals were not allowed to donate. Thus, targeted strategies and plans should be designed to increase awareness among health science students about blood donation during their academic years.

There was significant knowledge among medical students (71.5%), awareness (93.5%), and attitude (93.8%) in this study. Many studies conducted globally and worldwide showed different results. For example, a study among faculty students in Southwest Ethiopia showed knowledge of 69.3% and attitude of 58.1%, which are deficient compared to this study (14). Other studies in different regions of the world, such as Northwest Ethiopia (Gondar), showed knowledge and attitude levels of 48.2% and 79.2%, respectively (15); 97.1% and 88.8% in Malaysia (16); a study in Pakistan illustrated knowledge and attitude levels of 98% and 67% (17); 15.5% and 17.69% in a nearby country like Iran (18); and a European country like Italy demonstrated knowledge and attitude levels of 52.3% and 99.6%, respectively (19). In Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Syria, knowledge and attitude levels were 71% and 83.9%, and 99.7% and 40.4%, respectively (20, 21). In southern Iraq (Basrah), knowledge and attitude levels were 66.7% and 68.7% (22).

These variations among studies may be due to differences in participant samples (undergraduate medical students, healthcare professionals, pharmaceutical industry workers, students and teachers of religious

institutions, or the general adult population), sample size, study setting, methodology, definitions used in questionnaires to measure knowledge, and logistic and sociocultural factors (23).

Most medical students had better knowledge, attitude, and awareness about blood donation and blood transfusion strategies than non-medical students due to workshops, training courses, and educational lectures included in their curriculum (24,25). Studies in the general population illustrated poor knowledge, attitude, and awareness, indicating the need to design strategies by blood banks and related agencies (26). These strategies aim to motivate and encourage the population to donate blood, obtain efficient volunteers, establish training courses, and redesign jobs to provide efficient services (27). Moreover, legal control was not required for blood donation and blood products such as plasma and cryoprecipitate (28,29).

This finding agrees with other studies that reported no significant association between age or gender and blood donation (30). Age remains an important factor in blood donation strategies, as most students belong to younger age groups that constitute a large percentage of society,

while blood donation by older age groups should be approached with caution (31). Individuals who receive frequent blood transfusions, such as patients with hemophilia, may be at risk of infections such as HBV, HCV, and toxoplasmosis, which can limit blood donation (32,33,34,35).

The limitations of this study include restriction to one university, self-reported data, recall bias, and the use of a non-probability sampling method. Therefore, using a validated and flexible questionnaire with a problem-based approach and including participants from different sociocultural backgrounds is essential to obtain higher-quality evidence (36).

CONCLUSIONS: A considerable proportion of undergraduate medical students had insufficient knowledge about blood donation, while their attitude and awareness were satisfactory. Educational plans and motivational awareness campaigns in universities, as well as the inclusion of blood donation topics in medical curricula, should be improved to enhance blood donation practices.

Appendix -1-

Questionnaire

Age sex address

stage

Aware or know of blood donation

Source of awareness :

Mass media

Family

Awareness campaigns

Friends

Knowledge of one's blood group

Aware of where to donate blood

Place of blood donation

Knowledge about blood donation

Ever donated blood

Attitude towards blood donation

Barriers to blood donation

Pretexts that do not donate blood

Are you donor or not?

External incentives- motivation for blood donation

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المعرفة والمواقف والممارسة تجاه التبرع بالدم بين طلاب الطب الجامعيين - دراسة مقطعية في مدينة بغداد - العراق

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ملخص

يُعدّ التبرع بالدم ممارسة تطوعية عالمية تهدف إلى توفير الدم الكامل أو مكوناته للمرضى بوصفه تدخلاً طبياً أساسياً. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم مستوى المعرفة والاتجاه نحو التبرع بالدم بين طلبة كليات الطب في مدينة بغداد، العراق. أجريت هذه الدراسة المقطعية في كلية الكندي للطب - جامعة بغداد خلال الفترة من أيلول 2023 إلى أيار 2024. تم تنفيذ الدراسة باستخدام استبيان إلكتروني عبر نموذج Google، تضمن جزءاً خاصاً بالبيانات الاجتماعية والديموغرافية للمشاركين، وجزءاً آخر اشتمل على أسئلة متعددة تتعلق بالمعرفة والاتجاه وممارسة التبرع بالدم. شملت الدراسة 354 طالباً من طلبة الطب، كان منهم 236 (66.7%) من الإناث و118 (33.3%) من الذكور (P=0.000). أظهر معظم الطلبة، وعددهم 253 (71.5%)، امتلاكهم معلومات جيدة حول التبرع بالدم وفصائل الدم، كما أن 314 (88.7%) كانت لديهم معرفة بفصائل الدم (P=0.000)، وكان مصدر المعلومات الرئيسي هو الإنترنت ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لدى 165 (46.6%) (P=0.000). كما كان أكثر من ثلثي المشاركين، وعددهم 331 (93.5%) (P=0.000)، على دراية بالتبرع بالدم، في حين أن 13% منهم سبق لهم التبرع بالدم. وبين 23.2% وجود عوائق للتبرع بالدم لأسباب طبية، وكان المكان الأنسب للتبرع هو بنك الدم لدى 203 (57.3%) (P=0.000)، بينما أظهر 332 (93.8%) (P=0.000) اتجاهًا إيجابيًا نحو التبرع بالدم. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن نسبة ملحوظة من طلبة الطب الجامعيين لديهم معرفة غير كافية حول التبرع بالدم، في حين كانت الاتجاهات والوعي العام جيدة.

الكلمات الدالة: الدم؛ التبرع؛ الطلبة.

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تاريخ استلام البحث 2024/11/13 وتاريخ قبوله للنشر 2025/1/16.