

# PUNJAB BLOOD TRANSFUSION AUTHORITY

1-Birdwood Road, Lahore Ph #042-

## SUMMARY OF SAFE BLOOD TRANSFUSION ACT, 2015, SENT TO CM

The Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority also undertook to revise the 1999 Ordinance, under which the Authority initially took



charge. The Ordinance needed revision because not only was it is outdated according to the current requirements of the blood transfusion sector, but it also limits the power of the Authority to take actions in cases of non-compliance with the standards prescribed by the Authority.

The Authority has prepared a new template for the law with the technical assistance of GIZ. The draft was extensively reviewed by legal experts, BTA members, and technical experts. The necessary modifications were made, following which, a consensus was reached by all stakeholders on the new Act. The new document thus prepared has now been forwarded by the Authority into the legislative circuit for approval and enactment.

## DATABASE OF BLOOD BANKS ESTABLISHED

The Authority has, hence far, created a database of 500 blood establishments across Punjab. The organization, however, is still far from its goal of complete mapping of blood establishments in Punjab. Licensing inspections have been carried out in around 120 blood establishments. Licenses have been awarded to 40 blood establishments, whereas some 70 have been permanently closed for critical non-compliances identified by the BTA. Some establishments have been given observations with a time frame for rectifying deficiencies.



## INSPECTIONS COMPLETED IN LAHORE

The inspection process in the Lahore district has, been completed. The Authority would like to request support of all Health Authorities, including EDOs and DHOs to complete the database of blood establishments in Punjab.



Message from the Chairperson



The operationalization of the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority in 2013 has marked a significant step forward towards ensuring safe blood for the population of Punjab. With a population of 90 million, and more than 500 blood establishments currently existing, the scale of the blood transfusion sector of Punjab far outweighs any other province/region of Pakistan. The immensity of the sector combined with the fact that there has hitherto been little attention to blood safety, alone speak volumes about the challenging tasks that lay ahead for the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority. Notwithstanding the challenges and difficulties, the Government of Punjab is committed to its goal of safe blood for the entire population of the province. The significance of a well-functioning, fully resourced, and active blood transfusion authority to achieve the goal of blood safety cannot be overestimated. With this intent, the government has taken all possible measures to strengthen the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority. I am confident that continuing with the current pace of work, the Authority would soon be able to bring about a visible change in the quality and safety of blood available to the general public.

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## Message from the Secretary



Blood transfusion services are an integral part of health care services. Ensuring that blood available to patients is safe and efficacious is one of the prime responsibilities of the Government. Delivery of safe blood assumes even more importance in Pakistan due to the endemic prevalence of some transfusion transmissible diseases, notably Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B. At the same time, HIV is also on the rise in Pakistan. Keeping in view the significance of safe blood for the health of the population in general, the Government of Punjab has taken recent measures to strengthen the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority.

With the first edition of this e-newsletter, it is my pleasure to announce that the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority has decided to launch monthly e-newsletters. The main objective of the monthly e-newsletter would be to keep all stakeholders abreast with the developments in PBTA including its policy decisions, actions taken, trainings and workshops conducted, as well as any public announcements originating from the organization. Another objective is to underscore the importance of safe blood, and the essential elements which are required to ensure this. The Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority welcomes any suggestions for improvement of its functions and capacities, and looks forward to working with all stakeholders of the sector.

The process of registration, inspections, and licensing of blood establishments is well underway. At the same time, however, the Authority is aware that there are still some blood establishments in Punjab which have not applied for registration with the Authority. All establishments dealing in any way with blood or blood components (donor selection, blood collection, processing, storage etc.) are once again reminded of the requirement to register with the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority. Establishments which have already been licensed are requested to apply for a timely renewal of license, whereas establishments which are on probation for issuance of licenses are encouraged to rectify their deficiencies within the prescribed timeframe.

The Authority would also like to encourage readers to make use of the other resources, including the website of PBTA, and return frequently to see updates on policy decisions, regulations, and other appraises which we intend to make available on an on-going basis. The blood transfusion sector of Punjab is facing many challenges, and we still have a long way to go to ensure that blood being transfused to our patients is as safe as possible. But, at the same time, we must realize that overcoming these challenges is our joint responsibility. We must join hands and contribute as much as we can to our joint cause of safe blood for everyone.



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PUNJAB BTA

The Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority is a regulatory body, established under the Punjab Transfusion of Safe Blood Ordinance, 1999. The objective of this Authority is to ensure supply of safe blood throughout Punjab through setting of safe blood standards, and ensuring that these standards are implemented across the sector. In addition to maintaining a regulatory oversight over the sector, the Authority also assumes a steering role to guide the development of the Blood Transfusion Sector through increasing awareness of general public and blood bank staff about safe blood transfusions, and trainings of various cadres of staff.

The Authority remained dormant till 2013 due to financial, logistic and human resource constraints. Operationalization of the Authority started in 2013 under the current Administration. Immediately after assuming office, the Authority took to the task of developing regulatory tools for its functions such as guidelines, forms and formats. Thereafter, the Authority announced through print media, the requirement for all blood establishments to register with the Authority within a certain time frame, failure of which made establishments liable to legal proceedings. As a response, the Authority started receiving applications and was able to start the process of registration of blood establishments.

## STRUCTURE

The Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority, headed by a Chairperson and managed by a Secretary, comprises a Board of Governors, a Licensing Board, a Technical Committee, and a (proposed) Grievance Redressal Committee. The **Board of Governors** of the PBTBTA includes: Members of the Provincial Assembly, Secretary PBTBTA, Additional Secretary Health (Technical), Director General Health, Director of the Institute of Blood Transfusion Services (IBTS), Health Programme Director(s), Professors of Medicine, Surgery and Haematology/Transfusion Medicine, Commandant Combined Military Hospital (CMH), representative of Punjab Employees Social Security Institute, and representatives of NGOs/Blood Donor Organizations. The Board of Governors is responsible for the general superintendence, direction and management of the affairs of the Authority. Overall policy making in respect of its operations is vested in the Board of Governors. The **Technical Committee** comprises: Additional Secretary Health (Technical), Director IBTS, Professor of Haematology, representative of NGOs/Blood Donor Organizations. The Technical Committee provides advice on any matter referred to it by the Authority, including matters related to blood transfusion standards and quality assurance. The **Licensing Board** comprises: Secretary PBTBTA, one Professor of Haematology, and one other technical expert as decided by the Authority. The **Licensing Board** reviews all inspection reports and decide on the issuance of licenses to blood establishments, blood centers, hospital blood banks, and specialized blood transfusion services. **Inspectors** of the Authority have been nominated from each of the districts of Punjab, whereas two desk officers are working from the office of the Authority.

## FUNCTIONS



# **PUNJAB BLOOD TRANSFUSION AUTHORITY**

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The main functions of the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority are to (1) regulate all aspects of blood transfusion throughout Punjab and ensure that processes related to collection, testing, preparation, storage, distribution, issuance and administration are undertaken only by institutions that have been licensed by relevant authorities; (2) register blood establishments, issue licenses, and renew licenses periodically, indicating which processes the establishments are entitled to perform; (3) prescribe minimum standards and specifications for registration and licensing; (4) ensure that any serious adverse events related to the collection, testing, processing, storage and distribution, issuance and/or administration of blood and blood components are notified to the Authority; (5) organize inspections and appropriate control measures in blood establishments, to make certain that the legal requirements are complied with; (6) appoint Blood Transfusion Inspectors who will carry out functions assigned by the Authority in their territorial jurisdiction.

## **INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS TAKEN**

### **Setting up of the PBTB Office and Operationalization**

At the time of assuming office the Authority was severely handicapped for lack of office space, furniture, support staff, office material, and vehicles. With the assistance of the Government of Punjab, the Authority has been able to allocate office space, and procure other requisite items for its functions. An office vehicle has been provided by GIZ, whereas support staff has been provided by Government of Punjab. Recently, 2 desk inspectors have been appointed within the structure of the organization, whereas some technical support has been provided by GIZ.

### **Initiation of inspections and licensing**

After resuming functions, another impediment was a lack of inspectors. Initially, the Authority requested the Principals of teaching institutions across the country to nominate technical experts/haematologists to work with the Authority as inspectors. The Authority was able to start the process of inspections in major cities with the inspectors thus nominated. Thereafter, the Authority requested the Punjab Government to nominate inspectors in each of the districts of Punjab. As a result, the Punjab Government nominated 3 inspectors from each district: the DHOs (as focal persons), drug inspectors (for checking the status of registration and licensing of blood establishments), and technical experts (haematologists/pathologists). In addition, all EDOs are given the responsibility of monitoring of blood establishments in their respective districts. With a total of 150 inspectors nominated and trained to perform inspections across the province, a pool of inspectors has been created. These inspectors, however, need on-going training in specialized areas like use of information technology, data management, and other specialized areas.

### **Development of regulatory framework and tools**

With the help of its Technical Advisory Committee, the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority has developed tools for its functioning, which include:

1. Minimum Service Delivery Standards
2. Guidelines for Blood Transfusion Services
3. Registration Form

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4. Inspection Checklist
5. Data Collection Form

With these baseline tools the Authority was able to start the process of registration and inspections. With acquisition of some field experience, the Authority updated all of these tools and has developed a second edition of the standards and guidelines, registration form, as well as the inspection checklist. All of these regulatory tools are also available on the Authority's website.

## Conduction of trainings and workshops

After resuming functions, the Authority has conducted several trainings and workshops, as well as meetings with stakeholders for various agendas relating to improving the functions of the organization.

### Orientation of blood bank inspectors in Lahore



### Trainings of blood bank inspectors across Punjab in 4 locations



### Trainings of hospital transfusion committees in 3 locations



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## Pre-licensing awareness meetings in districts



Several technical meetings to draft and review the new Safe Blood Transfusion Act



Technical meetings to draft a concept of an MIS system for BTAs



## VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS AND WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY

A voluntary blood donation is a blood donation in which a person donates blood out of his or her own free will, only for altruistic reasons, without any reward in cash or kind. Replacement/directed donations are donations in which the patient/attendant(s) is asked to arrange blood for him/herself. If the blood group of the donor and the patient match, the blood is transfused (directed donations). If they do not, the blood is stocked and a group-match blood is issued (replacement donations). Replacement donations have a higher rate of transfusion transmissible infections than voluntary donations, while paid donations are highly unsafe because they are usually given by people for ulterior motives (e.g. drug addicts). Paid donations have a very high rate of transfusion transmissible infections. Even the most sophisticated methods of testing available may fail to detect such infections. Therefore, it is important that voluntary donations by anonymous donors, for altruistic reasons are promoted.



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On 14 June every year, the World Blood Donor Day is marked with events around the world. The day is celebrated every year as an annual event to appreciate the sacrifice of the voluntary donors who donate their blood to save lives. The theme of the 2015, World Blood Donor Day campaign, **"Thank you for saving my life"** focuses on thanking blood donors who save lives every day through their blood donations and strongly encourages more people all over the world to donate blood voluntarily and regularly. The campaign aims to highlight stories from people whose lives have been saved through blood donation, as a way of motivating regular blood donors to continue giving blood and people in good health who have never given blood, particularly young people, to begin doing so.

The Authority would like to request all organizations dealing with blood and blood components, as well as health authorities to promote voluntary blood donations and to discourage the practices of replacement and directed blood donations. Paid donations should be prohibited altogether. This should also be done through awareness of general public about the importance of voluntary blood donations and celebration of international events like the World Blood Donor Day. Also organizations collecting blood must have their donor management programs to mobilize voluntary blood donors, or liaise with the already existing blood donor organizations.

### Hepatitis control in Punjab

With an estimated prevalence of 10 million, Hepatitis (particularly B and C) is a public health menace in Punjab. There is no doubt that safe blood transfusion forms one of the most important measures to control hepatitis B and C. There are, however, other hospital, environmental, and personal practices which need to be modified to bring into control this public health issue. The Government of Punjab has formed a Task Force for this purpose, of which the Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority is an integral part. The objective of this Task Force is first to develop a comprehensive strategy to control Hepatitis B and C in the province, and then to translate the strategy into concrete actions.



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