

HUSSEINI BLOOD BANK – A BACKGROUND

(This article is dedicated to Hussein Pardhan who passed away recently in Bern, Switzerland. May Allah (swt) be pleased with him, amen.)

Husseini Blood Bank has its roots in Kampala. During Muharram of 1964, we had a chat with the then resident aalim of Kampala, Syed Sharafat Hussein Kazmi, regarding zanjir matam. He suggested that in addition to this practice we should start the practice of donating blood in the name of Imam Hussein (a.s.). He was fully aware that if he had suggested that instead of zanjir matam, we donated blood, this idea would fail. Therefore, we said, “let us try it”. At this point in time, the only person that we knew who donated blood regularly was late Hussein Pardhan. Thus he was known to the Red Cross. He was our very good friend and we asked him if he could arrange a special session at the Red Cross clinic on Ashura Day. Hussein was able to convince the Red Cross and we guaranteed 10 donors.

Thereupon, we tried to recruit potential blood donors. By coincidence the number that went to donate was 14. This was on May 23, 1964. This was the first time in the history of Shia that blood was donated in the name of Imam Hussein (a.s.). We decided that we would donate every year and encourage others to do likewise.

As a strategy, we asked all the donors to wear short sleeve shirts so that the band aid was clearly visible which would make people enquire. This worked and many asked us to arrange clinic on Chehlum day which was done. However, it was decided that this should be an annual event and done on Ashura Day only. The first session at 9.00 a.m. was for the ladies and the men’s session started at around 11.00 a.m. The Kampala Jamat provided us with its facilities and the blood donations continued unabated.

The Muharram lecturer, usually the resident aalim, would announce on Ashura night reminding that Husseini Blood Bank had organized blood donor clinic the next day being Ashura.

In our last year in 1972, the turn out was so great that the Red Cross ran out of supplies and many would be donors left disappointed.

Syed Kazmi had foresight. He said that when his contract expired and he had to leave Kampala, the next resident aalim may have some reservations. Therefore, he wrote a letter to the then marja of the time, either Ayatullah Hakim or Khui, asking whether it was in order to donate the blood to Red Cross who would use the blood for all whether they be Muslims or not. The response was that this was allowed without any conditions being imposed.

Syed Kazmi was then replaced by another scholar. Just at the beginning of Muharram, we informed him of the practice in Kampala about Husseini Blood Bank and asked him to ensure that he announced the program on Ashura night. He refused on the grounds

that the blood collected in the name of Imam, was going to be used for non-Muslims as well. He was not willing to go by the fatwa. After a lots of pressure, he agreed to announce but instead of stating that event was organized by Hussein Blood Bank, he would announce that the session was organized by the Welfare Committee. We agreed.

After leaving Uganda in late 1972, some of my family members went for Hajj, some proceeded to Karachi and I went to Kenya to complete the books of Kampala Jamat. By sheer coincidence many of us ended up in Karachi for the Muharram of 1973.

We discussed the issue of blood donations with our relatives in Karachi and were informed that the blood givers generally sold it and the patients purchased the blood. We raised the possibility of blood being donated and given free to the patients.

Our Karachi relatives suggested that we approach late Dr. Vajid. He liked the idea. Therefore, we suggested that the first donation under the title, Hussein Blood Bank, be on Ashura Day of 1973. This was arranged and there were 21 of us. Mehfil-e-Murtaza printed the picture of the first donors in its Silver Jubilee 25th Anniversary souvenir, published on November 13, 1997.

We had envisaged that this would be once a year event like that in Kampala. After Muharram, most of us went to UK and completely forgot about Ashura 1973.

But our community in Karachi is amazing! Like many other projects, Hussein Blood Bank was not left in doldrums. After several years, it was firmly established in 1979 and today the Hussein Blood Bank has 60 branches in Pakistan. A report from the CEO of the Bank is at the end of this article.

Today, we find blood is donated by our community in many parts of the world during the first 10 days of Muharram. This is a positive message to the public at large.

In 1982 or 1984, I was in Iran during the celebrations of Islamic Republic's anniversary. At that time there was the war between Iran and Iraq. I suggested that the guests should donate blood in the name of Imam Hussein (a.s.). Many guests agreed and arrangements were made with Red Crescent to bring its mobile unit to the hotel. Many guests, Shia, Sunni and non-Muslims donated blood.

Husaini Blood Bank

Our Mission for life

Husaini Blood Bank was founded in 1979 by (late) Dr. Hasan Ali Vajid and today it has become the largest blood bank in South East Asia with an annual turnover of more than 200,000 units of blood and its components from its 60 branches all-over Pakistan. **(as indicated in the article the clinic started in 1973 – Ghulam Sajan)**

Al-Hamdulillah, Husaini operates through seven state-of-the-art divisions and giving employment to more than 500 staff members:

- Husaini Blood Bank
- Husaini Thalassemia Center
- Husaini Hemophilia Center
- Husaini Institute of Hematology
- Husaini Diagnostic Lab
- Husaini Poly Clinic
- Husaini Pharmacy

We are well connected

Husaini Blood Bank - an independent blood bank accredited by RINA (ISO 9001), UKAS Quality Management, International Society of Blood Transfusion, Netherlands and PNAC (Pakistan National Accreditation Council) serving some 200 hospitals through a network of 60 branches all-over Pakistan. Husaini Blood Bank is a member of the American Association of Blood Banking(AABB), College of American Pathologists(CAP), International Society of Blood Transfusion(ISBT), Thalassemia International Federation(TIF), Thalassemia Federation of Pakistan(TFP), Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority(SBTA), Sindh Medical Faculty(SMF) and Sindh Board of Technical Education(SBTE).

Affiliations/Certifications/Memberships:

American Association of Blood Banking (AABB), American College of Pathologists (CAP), International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT), Thalassemia International Federation (TIF), External Quality Assurance System France (EQAS), Sindh Medical Faculty, Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority, Sindh Board of Technical Education.

Don't ponder... Open a blood account NOW!

Life is precious. Husaini Blood Bank – Blood account service is a simple and rewarding way that an individual, friends and associates can help us save lives.

It is an opportunity for people in business, community and youth groups across Pakistan to get together and do something special by regularly donating blood and helping their loved ones with blood supply during emergencies from their blood account. Be generous. Donate blood and share life and happiness with others.

Our Existing Services:

- Blood Transfusion Services.
- Care for Thalassemia and Hemophilia Patients.
- Thalassemia Eradication Program through Prevention and Awareness.
- Quality Laboratory Diagnostics Facilities.

- Health Awareness Programs.
- Poly Clinic (consultant clinics)
- Surveillance against Transfusion Transmitted Infections (TTI) - Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, AIDS & Malaria Syphilis.
- Vaccination Camps.
- Professional Training Programs for Youth Empowerment.
- Research & Development in the field of Blood Transfusion.

Towards a Healthy Future

Expansion Plans

Husaini Blood Bank started as an initiative to help people live better and healthier lives. Today, by the grace of God, it has grown much beyond our expectation. We now aim higher to take it to the next level to help people on a larger scale. Keeping in view, the rapid expansion of the Organization, Habib Medical Trust has granted to us a piece of land measuring 18,000 sq. ft. to offer the following innovative and state-of-the-art services and facilities from the new premises:

- **Digital Diagnostic Imaging (X-ray, CT, MRI etc.)**
- **Cord Blood Banking**
- **Stem Cell Harvesting**
- **Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS)**
- **Bone Marrow Transplantation Centre (BMT)**
- **Up gradation Programs for Medical Practitioners/paramedical staff**

The above information was provided by Br. Asad Ali, CEO, Husaini Haematology and Oncology Trust.