



# Blood transfusions caused nearly 9000 cases of HIV in India in past five years

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In the past five years as many as 8938 people in India have contracted HIV through blood transfusions, the *Times of India* has reported, raising concerns among experts.

Recent data obtained by the newspaper through a right to information request from the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) showed that 629 people across India became infected with HIV from blood transfusions from April to October 2014, including 80 people in Maharashtra, 99 in Gujarat, and 147 in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>1</sup> And in the past five years 969 people in Maharashtra, 1099 in Uttar Pradesh, and 1658 in Gujarat have contracted HIV from blood transfusions.

The data were collected from NACO's Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres. The *Times of India* said, "While officials have questioned its veracity, activists insist the numbers expose the glaring lack of accountability when it comes to ensuring quality of blood supplied by blood banks."

Vinay Shetty, vice president of Think Foundation, a Mumbai based non-profit organisation, described the figures as "shocking." However, he called for NACO to review the methodology that the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres used to arrive at these figures. And T Jacob John, retired professor and head of the departments of clinical virology and

clinical microbiology at Christian Medical College in Vellore, told *The BMJ*, "I am not surprised but very sad that corruption is rampant in healthcare service in India."

Nitika Pant Pai, assistant professor at the division of clinical epidemiology and infectious diseases at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, Canada, said that history was repeating itself and that similar incidents have occurred in many parts of the world, including Canada (in the early days of the HIV epidemic), China, and Thailand.

Pai told *The BMJ*, "Given the complexity of India, the laxity in quality execution of protocols, and a lack of oversight in public settings, a blame game is not the need of the hour. We need to step back and find solutions, ensure accountability of blood banks and blood safety measures, retrain and recertify lab professionals, and invest more money in HIV control and testing."

1 Deb Roy S. 1000 HIV+ cases in Maharashtra due to infected blood transfusion. *Times of India* 29 January 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/1000-HIV-cases-in-Maharashtra-due-to-infected-blood-transfusion/articleshow/46047954.cms>.

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