

Donation of Blood and Blood Transfusion

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"A survey of standard references reveals that 44 stamps related either to promoting interest in blood donations or to honor blood donors have been thus far issued by 39 different postal administrations. About two-thirds have been either semi-postal or postal tax stamps, the remainder have been commemoratives. To learn more about how these stamps were received, Drs. Kyle and Wolman wrote to 22 postal administrations, receiving replies from 13.

"The sale of semi-postal stamps can be very profitable. Finland reported 5,200,000 old Finnish marks were realized by the sale of three stamps. Switzerland obtained 1,542,617 Swiss francs from the sale of its five 1963 pro patria stamps and Belgium raised 1,427,637 francs from a series of six stamps, three of which illustrated an allegory of blood transfusion. The total number sold of any one issue of semi-postal stamps has varied from 300,000 for one stamp issued by Afghanistan, to 17,455,702 for a pro patria group of five issued by Switzerland."

As an example of the effectiveness of propaganda through stamps and for blood transfusion in particular, "in 1945 France had only five blood transfusion centers. In 1959 a commemorative stamp was issued to honor blood donors emphasizing the saving of lives by the availability of blood transfusions for injuries, burns and surgical procedures. In the year this stamp was issued, the number of blood transfusion centers had grown to 122 and the National Federation of Blood Donors (French) tripled in membership. In 1956 Belgium sold 12,999,000 stamps dedicated to blood donors. A stamp to commemorate the Third International Blood Donor Congress was issued by Monaco in 1962. In 1966 the German Democratic Republic joined the parade..

"The single activity for which semi-postal stamps are issued most frequently is the Red Cross, which is the Red Crescent in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. Belgium holds the record for total semi-postal stamps, having issued well over 800 thus far for widely varied purposes.

"Throughout the United States, blood banks and Red Cross blood centers continue to wrestle daily with problems related to shortages of blood and blood products for patients who need them. Practically every one of these centers is constantly giving valuable professional energy and time to publicity and to popular education, the direct purpose being the continuing recruitment of contributions of blood.

"Semi-postal stamps have never been issued by the United States, Great Britain, or Canada. The publicity attending the new U.S. commemorative stamp will be most helpful encouragement to the overworked blood banks and centers."

The stamps telling the story of blood, blood transfusion apparatus, and heart transplant are beautiful. The first stamp appeared in 1942 in Hungary, when it issued a semi-postal for Hungarian Red Cross showing blood transfusion. Another nine years passed before the second appeared in 1951 when Finland issued a series for Finnish Red Cross depicting the giving of blood and a blood donor's medal. In each year of 1968 and 1969 five "blood" stamps were issued. Ten stamps in two years is a good indication that postal administrations are doing their bit to encourage the giving of blood. Conscientious individuals have sponsored the use of slogans on metered mail urging blood donations.