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THE INDEPENDENT

## Transfusion centre to pay £150,000 for blood

A LONDON transfusion centre is to pay the Oxford region £150,000 a year for the supply of 200 units of blood a week to meet a chronic shortage in supplies, **Nicholas Timmins** writes.

The move is one more development of an internal market in the National Health Service, which is one of the reforms likely to be included in the Government's review of the NHS.

Traditionally, regional transfusion centres have freely helped each other over blood shortages. But tighter budgets have led regions such as Oxford, which usually produced a large surplus, to cut back on collection, leaving the four Thames regions in particular with difficulties in finding sufficient supplies.

In return for the contract, Oxford is to increase its blood collection, and the North East Thames regional transfusion centre at Brentwood will pay around £15 a unit. Dr Jean Harrison, Brentwood's director, said the blood was not being charged for or sold. The payment covered Oxford's costs for collection and handling. "If we get into any sudden difficulties Oxford will still supply us free for any blood above the regular supplies."

The south London centre in Tooting, covering South-East and South-West Thames, is considering a similar contract. A report on the future of the blood transfusion service is believed to recommend charging collection and handling costs between regions.

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### Blood money

The Oxford Regional Blood Transfusion Service, based at the John Radcliffe Hospital, is to supply 200 pints of blood a week to the North East Thames region of London to help meet a chronic shortage of supplies in the capital. It will cost £15 a pint to collect, process and deliver the blood.

THE STANDARD

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## Holiday threat to blood supplies

BLOOD supplies for hospitals in much of South-east England face a new threat later this year—because more people are taking holidays in exotic places, writes **Alan Massam**.

The problem was explained by a spokesman for the transfusion service centre at St George's Hospital, Tooting, which was this week "already facing shortages for two blood groups."

He said: "More and more Londoners are taking holidays in places like Turkey and West Africa which means that they would not be considered for a blood donation for six months after returning."

"The explanation is quite simple. We cannot afford to take blood from someone who may be carrying the virus of some exotic disease."

"All blood transfusion centres exclude donors who have just returned from such holidays."

"There is also a problem because people actually miss donor sessions when they are about to go on holiday. We wish that they would give blood before leaving."

"The directors of the centres are not suffering extreme shortages at the moment, but they feel the overseas holiday problem could be a source of difficulties in the future."