

Facebook Tool Could Boost Blood Supplies

Facebook has been under scrutiny for privacy concerns but that isn't stopping the social network from rolling out a new blood donation tool under its Social Good platform. The platform is aimed at helping non-profits and community organizations.

Facebook already has a blood donation tool in four countries that lets users give and ask for blood but it's now gearing up to launch the tool in U.S. within the next few months according to Kirby Winn, manager of public relations for Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center (MVRBC).

OSF HealthCare recently designated MVRBC to provide blood and blood components to all 11 of the health system's facilities. Winn says the national organization, America's Blood Centers, has been working with Facebook to tweak the platform used in other countries for U.S. users.

Winn isn't sure exactly how it'll work, but he says people will be asked to sign up as blood donors and blood banks and hospitals will be able to notify those signed up when a blood drive will be in near them. He says it'll help maintain a stable blood supply because it'll reach nearby donors when a blood or platelet drive is underway.

"It's a new way and a new platform to reach donors and meet people where they are already. If you've got a donor base that is actively using Facebook in the first place, this is a chance for us to share our message about the need to come out and give blood through that channel," he said while at an OSF HealthCare blood drive in Peoria.

Kirby thinks while many people are interested and willing to give blood, they might not know how to sign up, where to go, or have the social pressure to actually go do it. He thinks blood donors who regularly give, see it as part of their identity and that could be a game changer.

"Yes, I'm a blood donor. I help support my community blood supply and there's no better place than social media to express your identity and encourage others to follow suit."

Kirby thinks that adding badges and profile frames for donors who sign up with the tool could also help raise general awareness about the need for blood and promote a sense of supporting the common good.

Kiki Dupree, an OSF HealthCare accounts payable Mission Partner who is a regular donor, thinks a blood donor tool creates a highly visible reminder and she thinks the convenience of the sign-up and notification could prompt her Facebook network of friends, family and co-workers to become first-time donors.

Dupree suggested, "Because it kind of like takes the pressure off having to find where do I donate or you know, how do I donate? So if what you did was paired with a positive experience as well as an easy, accessible tool ... I mean we all have smart phones. They'll be more likely to do it."

OSF HealthCare Mission Partner Deb Steveson likes the idea of harnessing social media for positive change.

"Anytime you can put a little positivity out there to help others do good and just having a little reminder on Facebook; it's no pressure to folks, it just gives them a little reminder and encouragement to next time they have a day off to go donate blood and help others," she said while sitting in a blood donation chair.

According to [Business Insider](#), roughly 35 million people have already signed up with the tool across Brazil, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan since the blood donation tool was launched there roughly two years ago. According to the publication, Facebook worked with blood banks in South Asia and Brazil to survey donors, and found that 20% of them said Facebook influenced them to give blood.

Winn of MVRBC said his organization is not making predictions about how many new donors the tool could attract once it is available later this year on Facebook, but at the very least, he hopes it will encourage current donors to give more often, particularly during the slow times for donation such around holidays and during summer breaks for most schools which are a big source of regular donors.

[Learn more](#) about the need for blood and eligibility requirements.