



## Chronic fatigue sufferers can't give blood

News Canada

By CHRISTINA SPENCER, Parliamentary Bureau

Last Updated: April 7, 2010 7:33pm

Canadian Blood Services officials are barring anyone who has suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome from donating blood, for fear that a virus associated with the illness could spread to others.

Dr. Dana Devine, vice-president for medical, scientific and research affairs at the blood agency, said a U.S. study suggesting a link between chronic fatigue syndrome and a retrovirus known as XMRV prompted the blood service to err on the side of caution.

To-date, Canada is the only country to place the restriction on people who have had chronic fatigue syndrome in the past. Current sufferers are unlikely to offer donations in the first place since they are unwell, said blood services spokeswoman Jennifer Ciavaglia.

The new restriction affects those who, having once battled the illness, now feel healthy and want to donate. Devine estimated potential donors in this category at fewer than 1,000 Canada-wide. Deferring them from giving blood would have a "negligible impact" on the overall supply, said Ciavaglia.

XMRV is in the same general category of retrovirus as the AIDS virus, but the similarity stops there, Devine stressed. "They're in the same broad family, but it's like saying man and gorillas are primates," she said.

In fact, science to-date has uncovered no effects from XMRV on the human body, she said. And some studies conducted since the American one have not even found links between chronic fatigue syndrome and XMRV.

Still, the fact that XMRV might be transmissible from one human to another was enough to prompt the agency to exercise the "precautionary principle," Devine said.

"The science has now become more confusing, not less confusing."

[Christina.spencer@sunmedia.ca](mailto:Christina.spencer@sunmedia.ca)

<http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2010/04/07/13503671-qmi.html>