

Call for Experts

Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety

Issued on : 15 April 2021

Deadline : 12 May 2021

The World Health Organization (WHO) is seeking experts to serve as members one of the Advisory Group (AG) on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety. This “Call for experts” provides information about the advisory group in question, the experts’ profiles being sought, the process to express interest, and the selection process.

Background

Medicinal (medical therapeutic) products derived from human donations of blood and plasma, including whole blood and other blood components for transfusion, and plasma-derived medicinal products (PDMPs) play a critical role in health care and are fundamental for achieving universal health coverage. Safe, effective and quality-assured blood products contribute to improving and saving millions of lives every year. To ensure access to safe, effective and quality-assured blood products, a functioning national blood system is required. A robust national and regional blood service and blood regulator, with effective haemovigilance and pharmacovigilance systems for monitoring the safety of blood donations and blood product use, is also key to building and strengthening national and regional capacities to respond to emerging infectious threats.

Since 1975, the World Health Assembly has highlighted the global need for blood safety and availability through the adoption of several resolutions that have given greater priority to the issue within global and national health agendas. Key resolutions include:

- WHA28.72, Utilization and supply of human blood and blood products (1975);
- WHA56.30, Global health-sector strategy for HIV/AIDS (2003);
- WHA58.13, Blood safety: proposal to establish World Blood Donor Day (2005);
- WHA63.12, Availability, safety and quality of blood products (2010); and
- WHA 67.6, Hepatitis (2014).

However, progress in blood regulation and availability has been slow in many parts of the world. A major imbalance exists between higher-income and lower-income countries in access to safe, effective and quality-assured blood products. For that reason, the WHO Action Framework to advance universal access to safe, effective and quality-assured blood products 2020–2023 was developed. The framework gathers recommendations on the WHO programmes on quality of blood products and blood transfusion safety and WHO partners’ global efforts to address present barriers to the safety and availability of blood products. It aims to provide a unified global strategic direction to ensure access to safe blood products worldwide.

To this effect, it is proposed that the Advisory Group for Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety will support technical advisory functions of the WHO blood products programme and scale up the implementation of WHO policies and strategies to strengthen blood systems, and advance universal access to safe, effective and quality-assured blood products in the world. The role of this Advisory Group is to advise and support WHO at all levels on regulation and technical aspect of blood system.

Functions of the Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO, the AG shall have the following functions:

1. To advise on the development of WHO norms, standards, technical guidelines and high-level strategic recommendations on ensuring safety, quality and availability of blood products.
2. To advise on scaling up the implementation of existing WHO policies, strategies, including innovative strategies and tailored approaches; as well as strengthening the national systems for blood supply and regulation to achieve the goal of universal access to safe, effective and quality assured blood products.
3. To provide scientific assessment of current and emerging threats to the safety and availability of blood and blood products; to advise on the recommended measures and actions to be taken by the Member States in preparedness for and in response to the emerging public health threats.

Operations of the Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety

The AG on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety will be expected to meet at least once a year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings. AG meetings may be held virtually via video or teleconference or in person at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, or another location, as determined by WHO. The working language of the group will be English.

Who can express interest?

The Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety will be multidisciplinary, with members who have a range of technical knowledge, skills and experience relevant to blood regulation and blood transfusion medicines. Up to 25 [twenty-five] members shall be selected.

WHO welcomes expressions of interest from:

Scientists, healthcare professionals, and healthcare regulators with expertise the following areas:

- Norms, standards, technical guidelines, and strategic recommendations on blood system (blood regulatory system, blood supply system and blood transfusion system);
- Quality Management System including Good Manufacturing Practice for Blood Establishment;
- Innovative strategies to strengthen national blood system;
- Scientific assessment on current and emerging threats to safety and availability of blood products;
- Plasma fractionation;
- Haemovigilance and Patient Blood Management.

Submitting your expression of interest

To register your interest in being considered for the Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety, please submit the following documents by 12 May 2021, 24:00h (midnight) Geneva time to maryuningsihy@who.int and yuj@who.int using the subject line “*Expression of interest for the AG on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety*”:

- A cover letter, indicating your motivation to apply and how you satisfy the selection criteria. Please note that, if selected, membership will be in a personal capacity. Therefore do not use the letterhead or other identification of your employer;
- Your curriculum vitae; and
- A signed and completed Declaration of Interests (DOI) form for WHO Experts, available at <https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>.

After submission, your expression of interest will be reviewed by WHO. Due to an expected high volume of interest, only selected individuals will be informed.

Important information about the selection process and conditions of appointment

Members of WHO Advisory Groups (AGs) must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, applicants are required to complete the WHO Declaration of Interests for WHO Experts, and the selection as a member of a AG is, amongst other things, dependent on WHO determining that there is no conflict of interest or that any identified conflicts could be appropriately managed (in addition to WHO’s evaluation of an applicant’s experience, expertise, motivation and other criteria).

All AG members will serve in their individual expert capacity and shall not represent any governments, commercial industries or entities, research, academic or civil society organizations, or any other bodies, entities, institutions or organizations. They are expected to fully comply with the Code of Conduct for WHO Experts (<https://www.who.int/about/ethics/declarations-of-interest>). AG members will be expected to sign and return a completed confidentiality undertaking prior to the beginning of the first meeting.

At any point during the selection process, telephone interviews may be scheduled between an applicant and the WHO Secretariat to enable WHO to ask questions related to the applicant’s experience and expertise and/or to assess whether the applicant meets the criteria for membership in the relevant AG.

The selection of members of the AGs will be made by WHO in its sole discretion, taking into account the following (non-exclusive) criteria: relevant technical expertise; experience in international and country policy work; communication skills; and ability to work constructively with people from different cultural backgrounds and orientations. The selection of AG members will also take into account the need for diverse perspectives from different regions, especially from low and middle-income countries, and for gender balance.

If selected by WHO, proposed members will be sent an invitation letter and a Memorandum of Agreement. Appointment as a member of an AG will be subject to the proposed member returning to WHO the countersigned copy of these two documents.

WHO reserves the right to accept or reject any expression of interest, to annul the open call process and reject all expressions of interest at any time without incurring any liability to the affected applicant or applicants and without any obligation to inform the affected applicant or applicants of the grounds for WHO's action. WHO may also decide, at any time, not to proceed with the establishment of the AG, disband an existing AG or modify the work of the AG.

WHO shall not in any way be obliged to reveal or discuss with any applicant how an expression of interest was assessed, or to provide any other information related to the evaluation/selection process or to state the reasons for not choosing a member.

WHO may publish the names and a short biography of the selected individuals on the WHO website.

AG members will not be remunerated for their services in relation to the AG or otherwise. Travel and accommodation expenses of AG members to participate in AG meetings will be covered by WHO in accordance with its applicable policies, rules and procedures.

The appointment will be limited in time as indicated in the letter of appointment.

If you have any questions about this “Call for experts”, please write to maryuningsihy@who.int and yuj@who.int well before the applicable deadline.