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Using social media to recruit for a face-to-face Specialist in Blood Bank (SBB) Technology program

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The Specialist in Blood Bank (SBB) Technology training program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), NIH Clinical Center, Department of Transfusion Medicine (DTM) is a 1-year certificate program that is delivered face-to-face with a maximum of three students per year.¹ Students have a dual role as part-time employee and student. Classes are held 1 day per week, clinical rotations are scheduled throughout the year, and a student-managed research project is completed within the year. This SBB program exposes students to all areas in blood banking onsite at the NIH, including donor recruitment, blood collection, infectious disease and human leukocyte antigen testing, and component preparation and labeling, plus other areas such as patient apheresis and cell processing. The cell processing laboratory, recently renamed the Center for Cellular Engineering, manufactures, stores, and distributes cellular therapy components for infusion.

The Transfusion Service Laboratory (TSL) is a full-service blood bank where the students are employed. Blood components are collected on campus and locally for transfusion to the patients at the NIH Clinical Center hospital. Donor testing is performed, test results are managed, and components are manufactured, labeled, and brought into the TSL inventory. This inventory is available for patients and, if modifications are needed such as volume-reduction or irradiation, they are performed onsite. An average of 6153 whole blood units and apheresis platelet units were collected in 2020 and 2021. During this period, an average of 7062 transfusions were performed.

The TSL also has an AABB-accredited Immunohematology Reference Laboratory where students spend 4 weeks in a clinical rotation learning methods used to resolve complex serologic problems. Molecular testing is performed onsite, and students spend time in the Molecular Immunohematology laboratory. The overall American Society for Clinical Pathology examination pass rate since 1994 for our graduates is 96 percent.²

Statement of Disclaimer

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the NIH, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Federal Government.

In an effort to increase both awareness of the SBB program and the number of student applications, the idea of making a video was proposed. The video, with support by the Office of Communications and Media Relations, was created as a group project by SBB students (class of 2021–2022); they wrote the script, recruited actors, directed, and were featured in the video. The video described the management of the program and the success of the graduates. We believe this is the first video advertising an SBB program on YouTube.

To advertise this video, e-mails were sent to past NIH SBB students and Transfusion Medicine Fellow graduates, faculty, and colleagues, as well as to friends and family, with a request to share the video. The DTM's Facebook page was updated with a link to the video, which was also shared on Twitter. With the help of the Office of Communications and Media Relations and by personal outreach, professional organizations, universities, and colleges were contacted to view and share the video. Within 3 weeks of posting the video, it was viewed 850 times, reflecting the number of total views. Data can be extracted for number of unique viewers; this information and other analytics were reviewed after 3.5 months (Table 1). On average, viewers watched 40 percent of our 6:15-minute video, which we consider typical for videos of comparable length.

There are currently 12 programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, with only three being offered 100 percent onsite.³ All three onsite training programs are located in the Baltimore–Washington area. Standards and guidelines required for the SBB Technology/Transfusion Medicine programs are identical regardless of delivery mode. The decision to choose the applicable program rests on the learning style and personal situation of interested students. Cost, time commitment, admission requirements, educational offerings, advanced degree opportunities, and pass rates vary from program to program and will influence where applicants will apply.

We will monitor the positive outcome of using social media to make people aware of the SBB training program at NIH (as evidenced by number of views). We aim to increase the number of applicants to our program to educate and train future staff as leaders in the field of transfusion medicine.

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Table 1.

Analytics of Specialist in Blood Bank training program video for 962 unique viewers

Devices	Analytics*		
	Total views (n)	Time viewed	
		Average (minutes)	Percentage
Tablet	45	1:45	28
Mobile phone	742	2:00	32
Computer	438	3:18	53
TV (Internet)	18	3:36	58
Total	1243	2:28	40

* Data collected from 15 December 2021 to 31 March 2022.

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