

Safe Blood and Blood Products

Establishing a distance learning programme in blood safety: A guide for programme coordinators



World Health Organization
Blood Safety Unit
GENEVA

Contents

Preface

Introduction	1
1 DISTANCE LEARNING	3
Training: needs and constraints	3
What is distance learning?	4
A distance learning programme in blood safety	5
2 THE DISTANCE LEARNING MATERIALS	7
The modules	7
Features of the modules	10
Using the modules	11
Obtaining the modules	11
Additional materials	12
3 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE	13
Components of a distance learning programme	13
Responsibility for programme coordination	14
A model for the structure of a distance learning programme	14
Study centres	15
Participating centres	16
4 PROGRAMME PERSONNEL	17
The programme coordinator	17
The trainer	19
The supporter	22

5	SUPPORTING LEARNERS	26
	The importance of the learner support system	26
	Learners' support needs	27
	Methods of learner support	29
6	ASSESSING LEARNING	32
	Regulation of assessment and certification	32
	The purposes of assessment	32
	Stages of assessment	33
	Approaches to formal assessment	34
	Methods of assessing learning	35
	A time-frame for assessment	36
	Quality in assessment	37
7	PROGRAMME PLANNING	38
	Planning	38
	Building awareness and support	39
	Securing government approval and support	39
	Setting up an Advisory Group	43
	Training needs assessment	44
	Planning a pilot project	45
8	PROGRAMME MONITORING AND EVALUATION	48
	Monitoring and evaluation	48
	Planning evaluation	49
	Areas for evaluation	49
	Sources of data for monitoring and evaluation	50
	Analysis, interpretation and presentation of data	52
	Using the findings from monitoring and evaluation	54
	ANNEXES	
	1 WHO Aide-Memoire: Blood Safety	57
	2 Reproduction, translation and adaptation of the modules	59

Preface

This manual has been prepared for national blood programmes wishing to set up a distance learning programme in blood safety, using learning materials developed by the World Health Organization Blood Safety Unit (WHO/BLS) as part of its strategy to minimize the transmission of infectious agents, such as HIV, hepatitis viruses, syphilis and Chagas disease, through the supply of blood.

In 1994, WHO/BLS produced *Safe Blood and Blood Products*, a series of learning materials for staff who are responsible for blood donor recruitment and the collection, screening and issue of blood for transfusion, particularly those who would not otherwise have access to training. The materials can be used in conventional training programmes or for independent study, but were specifically developed for use in distance learning programmes to enable staff to undertake in-depth training without leaving their workplaces for long periods.

Additional learning materials are also being developed by WHO/BLS:

- *The Clinical Use of Blood*, for the prescribers of blood and blood products
- *The Blood Cold Chain*, for the managers and users of blood cold chain equipment.

Like *Safe Blood and Blood Products*, they can be used as resource materials in conventional training programmes, for self-directed learning or in distance learning programmes.

Distance learning is widely used in professional and vocational education throughout the world, but has not previously been used in the field of blood transfusion. WHO/BLS has included distance learning in its strategy to support training in blood safety because it offers blood transfusion services a cost-effective way of expanding their training activities when resources and facilities are limited. It is not meant to replace other approaches, but to be used in conjunction with existing training programmes.

Since the publication of *Safe Blood and Blood Products*, WHO/BLS has collaborated with all six of WHO's Regional Offices to hold a series of regional and sub-regional workshops for over 250 senior blood transfusion service personnel from 95 countries to promote the establishment of national distance learning programmes in blood safety. Workshop participants were enthusiastic about this approach to training, but few had any prior experience of distance learning and most felt they needed more information and technical support. WHO/BLS has therefore produced this manual to provide a practical guide for the personnel responsible for setting up and managing a distance learning programme in blood safety.

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Introduction

The WHO learning materials, *Safe Blood and Blood Products* can be used as resource materials in conventional courses and in-service training programmes and can also be studied completely independently for individual updating. However, they were specifically designed for use in a distance learning programme in which learners receive tutorial support, including practical training, throughout their study of the materials.

This manual introduces the distance learning approach and focuses on the design and implementation of a distance learning programme in blood safety. It examines the following aspects of setting up a distance learning programme in blood safety:

- 1 How distance learning can expand access to training.
- 2 The WHO distance learning materials, *Safe Blood and Blood Products*.
- 3 The structure of a distance learning programme in blood safety.
- 4 The role of key programme personnel:
 - the programme coordinator
 - trainers
 - supporters.
- 5 The learner support system.
- 6 The assessment of learning.
- 7 Programme planning.
- 8 Programme monitoring and evaluation.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Discussion points, indicated by the symbol shown on the left, are included in the margin of the manual. They are designed to assist you to relate particular issues to your country's specific needs and circumstances.

THE TOOLKIT

Accompanying the manual is a 'Toolkit', a set of resource materials to support you in starting a distance learning programme. For easy reference, symbols in the margin and a short description refer you to the items supplied in the Toolkit.



Checklists

The Toolkit contains ten checklists to assist in programme planning and evaluation which can also be photocopied for use as handouts in workshops or training sessions for programme personnel.



Overhead projector transparencies

The Toolkit also contains 35 'overheads' which can be photocopied onto overhead projector transparencies. They provide a comprehensive summary of the main topics covered in the manual and are designed for use in workshops or training sessions.

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