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Ask anyone you know what Héma-Québec is and does and they will probably tell you that it's the organization responsible for collecting blood in Québec.

People who know us well, however, are also aware of our role in the fields of research, stem cells and human tissues. Since its creation, Héma-Québec has committed 5% of its budget to research and development activities and currently supports some forty researchers at its Québec City facilities on the campus of Université Laval. Our organization also administers Québec's Stem Cell Donor Registry and Public Cord Blood Bank. Our activities in the field of human tissues have grown steadily since taking on this mandate in 2001, but our work in this area remains less well known than our blood-related activities. This situation will likely change dramatically in the next few years, however, and our team is preparing for the future.

Héma-Québec continues to adapt its original mission in the face of a constantly evolving world. For this reason, an updated vision was adopted in 2012: *To excel and innovate for better health.*

Arising from this vision, our *Healing, One Cell at a Time* project will extend

The future is being written today

our expertise and resources to Québec stakeholders involved in cell and tissue production. Cellular and tissue therapies, also known as regenerative medicine, depend primarily on the use of stem cells to replace damaged or destroyed cells with healthy ones. This type of therapy represents hope for the treatment of many cancers, bone marrow diseases, congenital disorders, corneal defects, joint cartilage damage, neurodegenerative diseases (including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's) and even heart failure.

While considerable research into cellular and tissue therapies is being conducted in Québec, there are several barriers preventing discoveries from being developed into clinical applications, notably access to standardized production, which is essential to obtaining Health Canada's approval for human clinical trials. This applies especially to products classified as drugs (including blood) or medical devices (such as laboratory-produced skin). The good news is that Héma-Québec's vast expertise in the area of regulatory requirements can help overcome this challenge – by providing Québec stakeholders with the certified and standardized products they need.

According to Québec's blood management system as it currently exists, Héma-Québec is a producer of standardized human biological products. In addition to its role as a supplier of blood products and components, Héma-Québec already plays an active role in cell and tissue production through the Public Cord Blood Bank, the Stem Cell Donor Registry and the tissue donation program. Our organization is also active in research and development in the area of cell production. All of these activities are regulated and audited by Health Canada or subject to international accreditation (AABB, ISBT, FACT, ASHI).

Regenerative medicine has the potential to improve patient quality of life and to reduce health costs by offering treatments for diseases that were previously incurable. Héma-Québec will provide patients quicker access to more products by simplifying and promoting the standardization and harmonization of practices as early as 2015.

A look back at the fall

You probably noticed that the end of the year was an eventful time. On November 28, 2012, Héma-Québec took the precautionary step of asking Québec hospital blood banks to quarantine packed red blood cells older than 14 days that had been collected with a particular device. The reason for the request was a micro-fissure found in some of the devices. Héma-Québec performed bacterial culture tests on a certain number of products and all the results were negative. Furthermore, no transfusion reaction attributable to this problem was reported by the Québec haemovigilance system.

Nonetheless, the number of defective devices identified led Héma-Québec to take action to limit the risk of contamination, however low it may have been. Héma-Québec thus introduced a series of measures to deal with the problem of micro-fissures found in certain collection devices and to continue to ensure a sufficient supply of blood products.

These exceptional measures resulted in the collective blood supply temporarily falling below optimal levels. Héma-Québec was nevertheless able to meet the daily transfusion needs of hospitals, and normal operations have now been restored. The exceptional response of staff, volunteers and donors again demonstrated the strong collective support for the important cause of the gift of life. Thank you one and all!

Dr. Jean De Serres
President and CEO of Héma-Québec

In Delano country:

sharing is everything!

“Learning to live with a chronic illness is traumatizing. I felt alone and different. I avoided talking about my condition. Today, I hope that telling my story will help someone,” states the real-estate agent who was quick to roll up his sleeves and help others like him.

Delano George suffers from a hereditary blood disease: sickle-cell anemia. His red blood cells have a lifespan six to twelve times shorter than the norm. They lose their elasticity and change shape. These changes prevent them from penetrating into small blood vessels. The result: his tissues and organs lack oxygen, causing lesions and a lot of pain.

“As a young boy, I couldn’t enjoy the same activities as my friends. I had attacks of pain in my arms, legs and organs. These could go on for days, sometimes weeks. The pain was so intense it kept me up at night, but nobody knew what was wrong and why I cried so often. It wasn’t until I was three years old that my parents figured out what I had.”

Since then, Mr. George has undergone five surgeries, most often for obstructed blood vessels. Blood transfusions are part of his preoperative treatments. However, after several transfusions, his body eventually began recognizing the transfused red blood cells as foreign bodies and developed antibodies against them. From that moment on, it became necessary to find blood that was even more similar to his, i.e., blood from donors of the same ethnic origin.

“I waited four months before receiving a transfusion that was supposed to be

administered to me before my surgery. I had a tumour the size of a grapefruit above my spleen and the longer it remained there, the greater the risk of it bursting. I was very scared. It’s not that there wasn’t anyone in the world who was compatible with me, but rather that one person, sitting at home, who may have been a perfect match for me, didn’t know it. This is why I tell people from every community to go give blood. Don’t be scared, you’re going to save a life! Think of it as if it was a member of your family because someday it might be. But don’t wait until it’s someone you know: saving a life is saving a life!”

As a recipient and volunteer, it is with conviction that Mr. George acts as a spokesperson for the cause of blood donation within his community. “We must inform the public and help them understand the importance of each person’s contribution. Without the involvement of the various ethnic groups, people will die needlessly. As for me, I am very lucky: I had the support of my community... and for that I am eternally grateful!” ♦

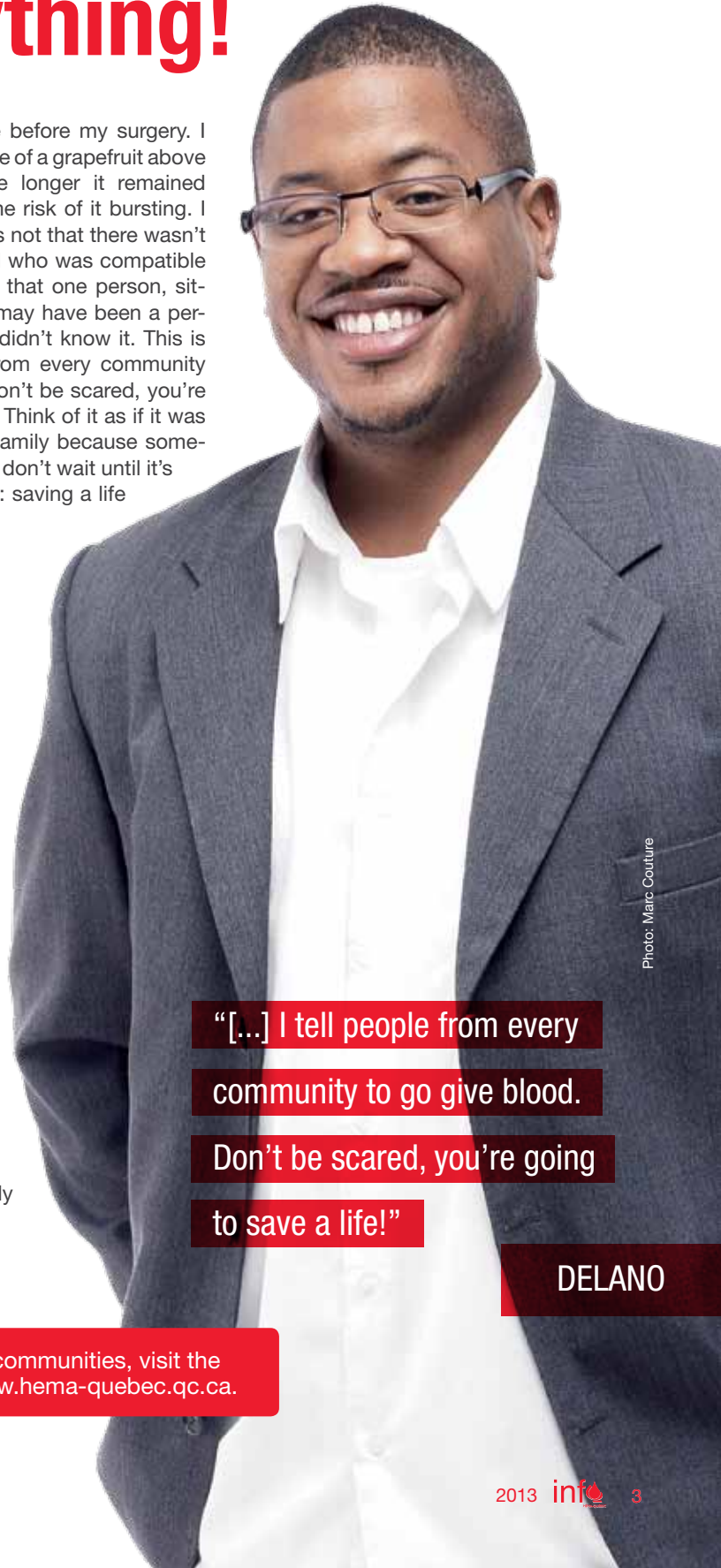


Photo: Marc Couture

“[...] I tell people from every community to go give blood. Don’t be scared, you’re going to save a life!”

DELANO

For more information on blood donation and cultural communities, visit the *Who Can Donate Blood?* section of our Web site at www.hema-quebec.qc.ca.

“At 18, you can do a lot of things. Giving blood is one of them.” Like many people his age, Vincent Lévesque was eager to take advantage of the privileges that come with the age of majority... and to have the right to share his health.

A few days after his birthday, he went to his first blood drive feeling a bit nervous. He went with his best friend and his two sisters. Together, they held out their arm for the first time!

“I really liked the experience!” remembers Vincent. Being type O negative, the nurse was quick to inform him that he was a universal donor, belonging to the only blood group that can be transfused to all other types. That was all Vincent needed to hear to feel that he had a mission: his blood is in high demand and he has the power to make a real difference in the lives of his fellow citizens! In fact, only 7% of the

The initiation

Québec population has O negative blood, while the demand for it is 14%.

He wasted no time in passing the word on to his friends who were soon to reach the age of majority: “giving blood is extremely gratifying. It doesn’t hurt and it saves lives.” To those who had reservations, Vincent simply said: “You’ll never know unless you try.” Thus, at his second visit to Héma-Québec, he was accompanied by not one but five new donors!

He also recruited team mates from his lacrosse team at Cégep Montmorency. “At lunchtime, there were often three or four of us donating blood at the Laval GLOBULE Centre,” points out Vincent, who finds giving as a group to be much more enjoyable.

Entering his final year of university, Vincent already has ten donations under his belt. With no specific goal to reach, he proudly continues his practice of giving blood with friends whenever the occasion arises.

One would think that this 22-year-old young man must have been affected early on by someone in his surroundings receiving blood or that he comes from a family of donors. But when asked at what point he realized that giving blood was a very important gesture, he said he couldn’t remember. He simply knew; just like we know that blood is vital. ♦



Photo: Julie Millette



WATCH THE VIDEO:





“Nobody knows when they will need blood products, but everyone hopes that when the time comes, someone will have taken the time to donate for them.”

Dominique, nurse at Héma-Québec.

Every fourth Thursday, the Montminys get together to give plasma at the Laurier Québec GLOBULE Blood Donor Centre. In this photograph, taken November 15, 2012, Huguette is flanked by her brothers Richard (on the left) and Serge (on the right).

TESTIMONIAL

The Montminys and blood donation

A family affair!

Huguette Montminy and her two brothers, Richard and Serge, get together once a month to give plasma at the Laurier Québec GLOBULE Blood Donor Centre. This family ritual is one that they have kept up with great pride for years. In fact, Serge began giving blood in 1972, followed closely by his brother and sister.

“Giving blood has become a normal part of our lives. Apart from being practical in terms of carpooling, going together is an extra source of motivation for us,” explains Huguette. “When we give blood, we relax at the same time. We chat, knowing that our gesture is helping to save lives,” adds Richard.

“We’re regulars there. We don’t even have to say our names when we arrive, and when one of us is not there, the volunteers ask after the missing member of our trio right away. We really feel appreciated and this motivates us to come back,” says Huguette.

Besides the warm welcome from the staff, the Montminys particularly appreciate the ability to make an appointment, something the GLOBULE Centres offer. In fact, Serge wouldn’t go without it anymore: “I sometimes go twice a month. I really like being able to plan my donations. This allows me to maximize the help that I can bring to those in need.”

“Nobody knows when they will need blood products, but everyone hopes that when the time comes, someone will have taken the time to donate for them. Whether it’s at a mobile blood drive, at a GLOBULE Blood Donor Centre or at a mobile unit, the few minutes that you dedicate to blood donation will be a worthwhile investment,” conclude the three donors. ♦

To learn more about our GLOBULE Blood Donor Centres, visit the *Where to Donate?* section at www.hema-quebec.qc.ca.

Véronique Leduc

As genuine on the phone as in life!

Véronique Leduc walks the hallways of Héma-Québec warmly greeting colleagues and volunteers. You can tell she is happy in her role as special donation call centre agent. Her responsibility: calling donors to invite them to make an appointment or to get their feedback on their last visit.

Beyond blood donation, a cause she holds close to her heart, this young lady particularly appreciates the work environment at Héma-Québec. “It takes a good dose of curiosity. There are so many things to

discover on transfusion medicine and on the various types of donations. I’m amazed at all the things I’ve learned since I’ve been here,” she acknowledges at the outset.

For many, making over a hundred calls per day could seem tedious, but for Véronique, it’s an entirely different story. A graduate in social work and graphic design, she is passionate about anything that involves the human side and creativity, two elements she says are present in her work.

“After over four years of doing this job, I still find it important to be attentive to donors and to stay upbeat. I like adding my personal touch,” she reveals. “Plus, I love the contact with donors. They are so generous, receptive and always in a good mood. I feel very lucky that they are part of my everyday life. It’s always a gift to see them so committed to saving lives!” ♦

Did you know?

Several hundred volunteers and about thirty agents in call centres support the cause of blood donation by making nearly 1.2 million calls every year to recruit donors.

Is blood donation important to you?

We are looking for people to participate in discussion groups on blood donation. If you are interested, write to us at info@hema-quebec.qc.ca.

“It’s always a gift to see them

so committed to saving lives!”.

VÉRONIQUE

Photo: Julie Vaudry



A few volunteers and members of the Ville de Saint-Eustache blood drive organizing committee present the final number of donors who came on July 4. From left to right: Germain Lalonde, Marguerite Vanasse, André Bélanger, Cynthia Bouchard, Guillaume Demers, Suzanne Bélec (Héma-Québec), Carlo DeBonis, Nicole Carignan-Lefebvre, Gérald Demers and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre.

Photo: Ville de Saint-Eustache

TESTIMONIAL

An innovative organizing committee

Recent data from NETendances reveal that eight out of ten Québec Internet surfers use social media. One out of three view content on a daily basis. Results clearly show that social media are firmly entrenched in Quebecers' lives. The Ville de Saint-Eustache blood drive organizing committee has incorporated this reality into its donor recruitment strategy.

Guillaume Demers, a development agent in the communications department at the Ville de Saint-Eustache, was in his third year as coordinator of the annual blood drive when it became clear that the drive, now in its 36th year, was attracting fewer and fewer donors. He felt that turning to social media was the answer.

In the summer of 2011, the "T'es pas game!" (Are you game?) campaign was thus launched on YouTube and Facebook. A short video produced by Guillaume in

which he admitted to being a "wimp" impelled people to overcome their fears and take action. This first effort had a positive impact.

The Ville de Saint-Eustache turned to this strategy once again to promote its July 4, 2012, blood drive. This time, Guillaume Demers and his committee recruited 12 speakers, most of whom lived or grew up in Saint-Eustache and its surroundings, to produce a promotional video. In a series of frames, these individuals explained why they hadn't generally taken time to give blood, and why they would now make it a priority. The video was viewed more than 1,800 times and attracted a good number of donors, close to 16% of whom were giving for the first time!

"What we want above all is to attract new donors," he explains. "But the ultimate goal is also to inform and educate the

public about the importance of blood donation," says Guillaume proudly.

The Facebook page created for the occasion, "Sauvez 4 vies le 4 juillet" (Save four lives on July 4) was also put to use. Every day, Guillaume spent a few minutes on it posting details about the blood drive and information vignettes on blood donation. As a result, the Ville de Saint-Eustache surpassed its goal of 500 donors, receiving 516, a first in four years!

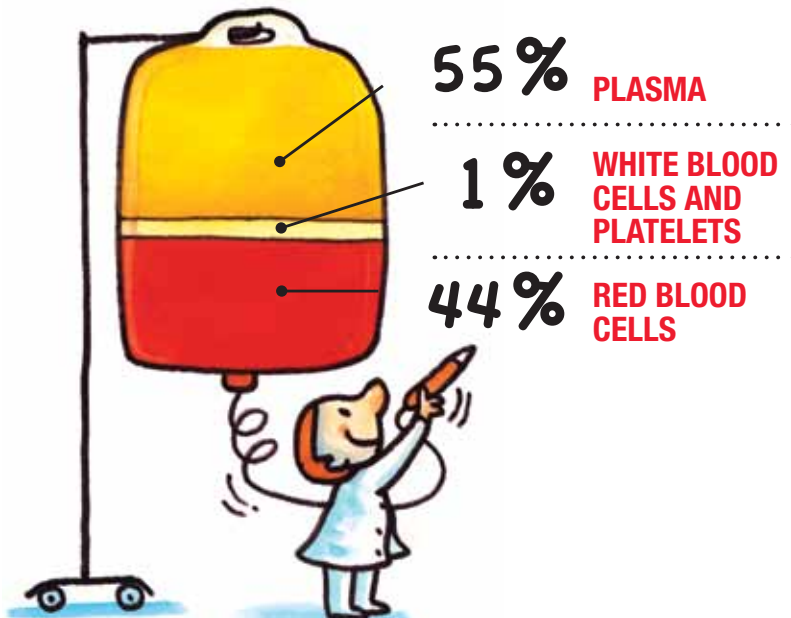
The winning recipe, according to the blood drive coordinator, was not hesitating in using resources outside his organizing committee. "It's accessible to everyone. As long as you have a little curiosity," states Guillaume, who has clearly understood this, surrounding himself with talented volunteers dedicated to the cause of blood donation. ♦

For more information about organizing a blood drive, visit the *Get Involved* section at www.hema-quebec.qc.ca.

Your **blood type** can

DID YOU KNOW?

BLOOD CONTAINS:



When a person is transfused, he or she receives only the needed blood component.

A technology called apheresis makes it possible to collect only the desired blood component: red blood cells, plasma or platelets.

Donations by apheresis are done exclusively in our *GLOBULE Blood Donor Centres*.

You are type

O

We need your RED BLOOD CELLS



Your red blood cells can be transfused to all blood types, which is very useful in emergency situations.

Red blood cells are often administered after an accident, during surgery or to treat anemia.

46% of the Québec population is **type O**; of this number only 7% is Rh negative.

make a difference

You are
type
AB

We need your
PLASMA



Your **plasma** can be transfused to all blood types, which makes it very valuable.

Plasma is particularly effective in treating serious burn victims and controlling bleeding.

3% of the Québec population is **type AB**; of this number only 0,5% is Rh negative.

You are
type
A

We need your
PLATELETS



Your **platelets** can be transfused to 88% of patients.

Platelets are often prescribed after chemotherapy (used to treat certain cancers, such as leukemia).

42% of the Québec population is **type A**; of this number only 6% is Rh negative.

You are
type
B

We need your
PLASMA



Your **plasma** can be used for close to 50% of the population, whereas your red blood cells can only be transfused to 12% of patients.

Plasma is particularly effective in treating serious burn victims and controlling bleeding.

9% of the Québec population is **type B**; of this number only 1,5% is Rh negative.

Héma-Québec Public Cord Blood Bank

The first Canadian public bank on the international scene

While other Canadian provinces are only now starting to set up public cord blood banks, Québec's bank—active since 2008 in Canada—is making its debut on the international scene.

Since September 2012, patients around the world in need of a cord blood transplant have been able to count on Héma-Québec to help them. Already in November, its public cord blood bank had received a dozen requests for compatible unit searches, from various countries including the United States, France, England, Turkey, India and Greece, to name but a few.

Cord blood is an excellent source of stem cells, which are very useful in treating serious illnesses such as leukemia. At this time, more than 800 Canadians are in

need of a stem cell transplant, including close to 150 Quebecers.

Héma-Québec makes every effort to achieve a high quality medical and laboratory practice in cellular therapy. Héma-Québec's Public Cord Blood Bank has more than 7,000 donations available for hospitals. To date, more than 24 units have been distributed in Québec and one in western Canada.

The Héma-Québec Public Cord Blood Bank is the first Canadian public bank to obtain NetCord-FACT accreditation, which places it among leaders in the field. These international standards are defined by leading experts based on the latest knowledge in the field of cord blood banking. In cellular therapy, NetCord-FACT accreditation is considered a key qualification. ♦

Who can give cord blood?

Only healthy women aged 18 years and older carrying a single baby (no twins) can register with the Public Cord Blood Bank, provided that they do so before the 36th week of pregnancy and are delivering at one of the following hospitals:

- St. Mary's Hospital Centre
- CHU Sainte-Justine Mother and Child University Hospital Center
- Royal Victoria Hospital
- CHUQ—Centre mère-enfant
- Cité-de-la-Santé Hospital (Laval)
- LaSalle Hospital Centre
- Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal
- Lakeshore General Hospital



Umbilical cord blood units are stored in these containers, where they are kept in nitrogen at a temperature below -150°C .



About sixty volunteers contributed to the success of the first edition of a stem cell donor recruitment day organized for Montréal's Chinese community in 2012. Their efforts resulted in signing up more than 230 potential donors of Chinese origin.

STEM CELLS

Chinese Quebecers invited to save lives

The Registry of life diversifies

As part of a national initiative aimed at Chinese Canadians, OtherHalf – Chinese Stem Cell Initiative and Héma-Québec are joining forces again in March 2013 for a stem cell donor recruitment day within the Québec Chinese community.

Last year, the results were very successful, with 233 potential donors from the Montréal Chinese community registering on the Registry of life thanks to the involvement of community leaders.

The Chinese population represents only 0.06% of the Québec registry and close to 3% of the Bone Marrow Donors Worldwide database. Among Chinese patients who must find an unrelated donor, less than 20% are successful in finding a compatible match. As a result, most of them pass away because they were unable to receive a bone marrow transplant.

There are currently more than 30 Chinese patients in Canada desperately searching for the stem cell donor who will enable them to survive. Since the chances of finding a compatible donor and recipient are greater within the same ethnic group, it is crucial to recruit donors of Chinese descent.

If you could save lives, would you?

Over 12,000 Canadians are diagnosed with blood cancer each year. For many, their survival depends on a stem cell transplant. Only 25% will find a compatible match within their family, which means 75% of patients must rely on the kindness of strangers.

Healthy Quebecers aged 18 to 35 can volunteer to make a donation by enrolling on the Héma-Québec Stem Cell Donor

Registry. It simply involves giving a bit of your time and being willing to donate stem cells to anyone in need of a transplant. ♦

To register, fill out the online form at www.hema-quebec.qc.ca, under Stem cells. Once you have completed this step, Héma-Québec will send you a kit by mail to perform a cheek swab, which involves collecting a sample of your saliva by rubbing the inside of your cheeks with cotton swabs.



“Seeing has taken on a whole new meaning for me”

— Louise Godin



Photo: Marc Couture

LOUISE

In 1979, at the age of 24, Louise Godin returned home after a vacation. Her plants were rather dehydrated, and so she hurried to water them. As she rushed towards a pot to pour some water in it, she poked her right eye on a sharp stake. The injury damaged her cornea and crystalline.

“My cornea was repaired right away, but the injury also caused a cataract, and I had to undergo surgery again a few weeks later. I ended up developing several minor infections and only recovered 10% of my sight. For fifteen years, I was able to manage by compensating with the other eye, but in 1994, the situation got worse. My vision was becoming more and more blurry, I was getting frequent headaches and felt less comfortable performing my daily tasks,” Godin explains.

At 39, Louise went back under the knife. This time, doctors replaced her crystalline with an intraocular lens and transplanted a new cornea. “The moment I found out that they had found a cornea for me, my first thoughts went to the donor. I realized that this news that made me so happy was also touching a family somewhere. You have no idea how moved and grateful I was at the same time.”

A few months after the transplant, Godin’s eye had recovered 90% of its capacity. “I was impressed by how

clearly I could see colours and details. I almost had a car accident one day because I kept looking at everything around me.”

Louise knows that she was lucky. Some people waiting for an organ or tissue transplant will never get the help they need. “There are some things you don’t think about until they happen to you. It’s only then that you realize how much of an impact they can have. Consenting to organ and tissue donation provides a small miracle for another person. If I hadn’t had a corneal transplant, I would not be dead, but let’s just say that my quality of life has been greatly improved by it. Seeing has taken on a whole new meaning for me.” ♦

Did you know?

For over a year now, Héma-Québec has been serving as Health Canada’s central facility with regard to the activities of two eye banks in Québec, one at Maisonneuve-Rosemont hospital in Montréal and one at the Centre universitaire d’ophtalmologie à Québec (CUO).

In addition, Héma-Québec will soon be offering ophthalmologists specialized in corneal transplant a new type of product, the pre-cut cornea. Up until very recently, this product, which enables surgeons to reduce operating times, was imported from the United States. Héma-Québec thus hopes specifically to meet the needs of local corneal specialists, all the while ensuring a quality supply that is sufficient for the Québec population.

To learn about human tissue donations, visit the *HUMAN TISSUES* section under the *DONATE* tab at www.hema-quebec.qc.ca.

HÉMA-QUÉBEC

First to offer lyophilized bones in Canada

For a little over a year now, Héma-Québec has been manufacturing and distributing lyophilized spongy bone for hospitals performing orthopedic surgery. It is the first Canadian organization to do so. As a result, the country's hospitals have a musculoskeletal allograft production chain based entirely in Québec to meet their needs.

Lyophilization is a drying method that allows biological products to retain their physical structure. Its main advantage is that it facilitates transport, preservation and inventory management:

the lyophilized spongy bone is stored at room temperature rather than being kept frozen at -80°C . "Essentially, this initiative allows Héma-Québec to diversify its available allografts and facilitate storage logistics for hospitals," explains Jacynthe Tremblay, head of product development-human tissues in Héma-Québec's operations division.

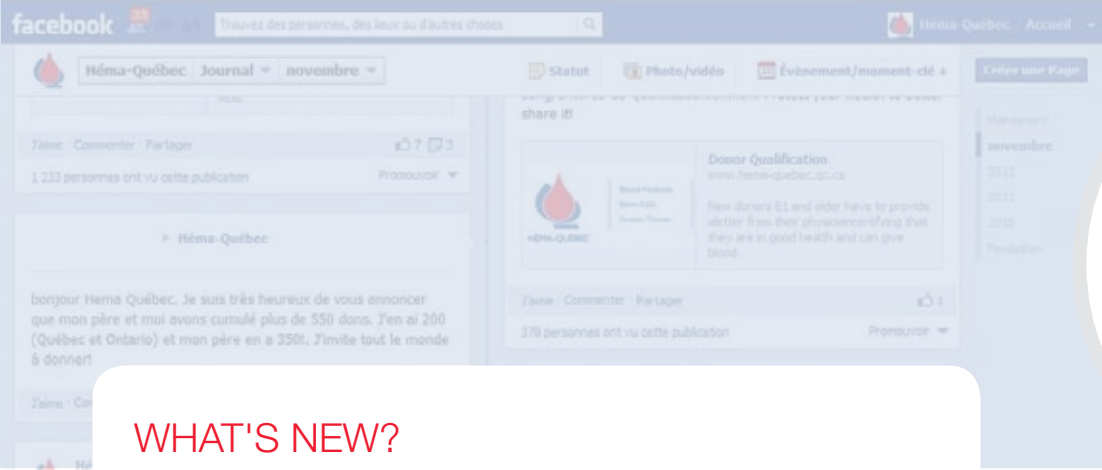
Héma-Québec also supplies spongy bone chips to Canadian orthopedists. As with lyophilized bone, spongy bone chips are frequently used in orthopedic surgery. ♦

Electric cars

Héma-Québec is gearing up to go green!

In an effort to be efficient and innovative, Héma-Québec acquired two electric cars in the fall of 2012. The first, a Chevrolet Volt, travels a distance of 50 kilometres on a single charge using a regular power outlet. The gas-powered generator kicks in for longer distances. The second model, a fully electric Ford Focus, offers a range of at least 125 kilometres. These vehicles are currently being used by the human tissue collection team in Montréal, which travels short distances. The benefits of extending this concept will be evaluated over the coming months. ♦





WHAT'S NEW?

Héma-Québec reaches 10,000 friends on Facebook

By developing a more personalized and interactive communication style, Héma-Québec is reaching the younger generation. The number of registered donors from colleges and universities reached 26,779 in 2012, up from 21,936 five years ago. This represents a 22% increase.

Knowing that young people spend a lot of time on new electronic media, Héma-Québec has stepped up its communication efforts in this area over the past few

years. Its most recent Web campaign, *Your first time, what was it like?*, concluded in November 2012. It was launched a year earlier in an effort to dispel any fears related to blood donation in youth aged 18 to 35 as well as to create donor loyalty. Héma-Québec bet on the Web and social media to connect with the next generation, creating ten 30-second clips. These videos, which were released gradually, depicted real donors overcoming their fears or working towards doing so.

Apart from the increase in the number of young donors registered, a direct link was found between the release of clips and an increased number of visits recorded on the Héma-Québec Web site (this number has risen 33% over the past year). Moreover, in November 2012, Héma-Québec's Facebook page surpassed 10,000 friends and it reached over 1,200 followers on Twitter, while its YouTube page had over 34,000 video views. ♦





HELP ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES

HÉMA-QUÉBEC
FOUNDATION 



MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE HÉMA-QUÉBEC FOUNDATION IS TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE PROJECTS THAT WILL HELP TO KEEP HÉMA-QUÉBEC AT THE FOREFRONT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICES IN ALL ITS AREAS OF ACTIVITY AND EXPERTISE, ALLOWING THEM TO DO MORE, DO IT BETTER AND DO IT FASTER.

HOW TO HELP

- Donate (ask about our monthly monetary donation program)
- Organize a fundraiser
- Donate in memory of a loved one
- Donate in honour of or to celebrate a special occasion
- Establish a named endowment fund
- Plan a charitable bequest
- Give publicly listed securities
- Donate products and/or services

Online donation: fondation.hema-quebec.qc.ca

Donation by phone: 514-832-5000, ext. 372
or 1-888-666-HEMA (4362), ext. 372

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Telephone: 514-832-5000, ext. 372 or 1-888-666-HEMA (4362), ext. 372

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Your blood type
can make a difference.

