

# Five-point plan for better blood health in Europe

## Blood and Beyond recommendations for the new EU term

To advance blood health in Europe:

### EU bodies should

1. Recognize the importance of blood health and promote its advancement through patient blood management (PBM).
2. Fund an EU-wide project to promote PBM implementation and enhance national-level expertise.
3. Support the creation of a European network of PBM reference centres.

### EU Member States should

4. Implement WHO guidance on PBM implementation and develop national strategies for patient safety and quality of care that incorporate PBM.

### WHO Europe and OECD should

5. Incorporate PBM implementation as a quality-of-care indicator for health systems performance assessment.

## Blood health in the EU

The European Union (EU) should recognise the importance of promoting 'blood health' and address the vast, under-recognised impact of anaemia, iron deficiency, blood loss and coagulopathy on public health, quality of life, productivity, patient safety, and health systems across Europe.

As a priority, the EU and its Member States should advance the systematic implementation of patient blood management (PBM) as the overall framework for better blood health in Europe, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>1</sup>

Blood and Beyond recommends concrete EU policies and actions to support EU-wide, patient-centric anaemia care through multi-level PBM implementation in all medical specialties (i.e. European, national, and institutional) and to promote research and innovation to improve blood health in Europe and reduce healthcare costs.

## How to advance blood health in Europe?

Around 28 million people in the EU are estimated to have anaemia.<sup>2</sup> Yet, anaemia remains vastly underrecognized, underdiagnosed, and under-treated.

Better anaemia care across Europe begs urgent EU-level action to support Member States, as Blood and Beyond has previously highlighted.<sup>3,4</sup> The priorities are to support a patient-centric approach to anaemia care that focuses on prevention, early detection and improved disease management, in particular through wider PBM implementation.

### What is PBM?

PBM is a patient-centred, systematic, evidence-based approach to improve patient outcomes by managing and preserving a patient's own blood while promoting patient safety and empowerment.<sup>5</sup>

Endorsed by the WHO, PBM includes 1) screening for, diagnosing and appropriately treating anaemia (and iron deficiency) according to the underlying cause, 2) minimising blood loss and managing blood clotting problems, and 3) supporting patients while appropriate treatment is initiated.<sup>1,5</sup>

### Through these actions, the EU can help:



Improve patient safety and health outcomes for Europeans through better blood health



Reduce the health system burden, potentially saving costs to EU economies<sup>6</sup>



Strengthen the European Health Union and EU collaboration and support the health workforce



Enhance the EU's competitiveness in the healthcare sector

# Policy recommendations to advance blood health in Europe

We call on EU bodies (the European Commission, the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament), WHO Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the EU Member States to embrace five specific policy recommendations to promote better blood health through patient-centred anaemia care across Europe.

## EU Bodies should

1

### Recognize the importance of blood Health and promote its advancement through patient blood management

EU bodies should publicly acknowledge the importance of good blood health and the benefits it can bring to patients, health systems, and societies. This can be done through the inclusion of the topic of blood health, and PBM as a vehicle to achieve it, in official EC meetings, the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU.

Blood & Beyond would welcome public references by Commissioner Varhelyi about the importance of blood health.

2

### Fund an EU-wide project to promote PBM implementation and enhance national-level expertise

The EU should ensure that its investments to strengthen healthcare systems and improve patient safety and quality of care cascade to specific initiatives to help implement PBM in Member States (e.g. via European Semester recommendations for health reforms, DG REFORM contributions, etc).

The EC should launch a project on PBM implementation to support optimal anaemia prevention, management, and treatment to:

- Observe how WHO guidance on PBM implementation<sup>7</sup> can be implemented most efficiently
- Identify and scale up new opportunities and approaches to improve patient outcomes by harnessing innovation and fostering PBM implementation
- Help identify barriers to PBM implementation and adapt and reorientate health systems towards PBM in all relevant care pathways
- Strengthen the evidence of PBM safety and efficacy in Europe and map best practices by leveraging current national experiences and learnings to support Member States' implementation efforts.

3

### Support the creation of a European network of PBM reference centres

The network should be created with the aims to:

- Raise awareness among healthcare professionals and providers, and support collaboration across disciplines and care settings, to promote the systematic prevention, early diagnosis, and management of anaemia, including iron deficiency anaemia and bleeding management.
- Educate and upskill the healthcare workforce to implement PBM approaches, sharing expertise and best practices
- Such a network would also support data collection and research on PBM implementation and its benefit for health systems.

## EU Member States should

4

### Implement WHO guidance on PBM implementation and develop national strategies for patient safety and quality of care that incorporate PBM

Taking WHO guidance<sup>7</sup> as a reference, EU Member States should adopt policies to promote the implementation of PBM in their health systems.

Building on WHO Europe recommendations,<sup>8</sup> all EU Member States should develop national action plans for quality of care and patient safety. These plans should reference PBM as a patient-centric standard associated with better patient outcomes.

## WHO Europe and OECD should

5

### Incorporate PBM implementation as a quality-of-care indicator for health systems performance assessment

PBM implementation should be incorporated as a patient safety and care quality indicator as it contributes to better patient outcomes.

PBM implementation should be accounted for in the assessment of national healthcare systems in the EU/OECD *Health at a Glance* report and the evaluation of national patient safety and care quality plans made by the WHO Europe Office of Patient Safety and Quality of Care.

## References

1. WHO. The urgent need to implement patient blood management: policy brief (2021). 2. Safiri S, et al. J Hematol Oncol 2021;14:185. 3. Blood and Beyond. Rethinking blood use in Europe to improve outcomes for patients (2020). 4. Blood and Beyond. Blood use in Europe: addressing the impact of COVID-19 (2021). 5. Shander A, et al. Anesth Analg 2022;135:476–88. 6. Lasocki S, et al. Transfusion 2023;63:1692–700. 7. WHO. Guidance on implementing patient blood management to improve global blood health status (2024). 8. WHO Europe Regional Office. Taking the pulse of quality of care and patient safety in the WHO European Region: multidimensional analysis and future prospects (2024)