

INTRODUCTION

This book on **Blood and Diseases of the Blood** is written for patients, their families, and friends. During the years that I cared for patients with these diseases, I had many calls from friends and friends of friends asking questions about a particular problem. The questions were, for the most part, simple to answer, but the people asking the questions said it was either hard to find an answer or hard to understand the information they received.

The social worker at The Regional Cancer Center in Erie, Pennsylvania, Sister Moira Sullivan, and another close friend, Barb Junker, encouraged me to write a book that could be understood by a lay person about the blood and its diseases. I originally thought I would write a general chapter about blood and then give handouts regarding each disease or topic. As this evolved, Sister Moira was a great help, and although we considered having this published as a book we still believe it will be more valuable as a reference for people with a specific problem. Two other employees without medical background have also read this material and pointed out areas they found hard to understand. These areas were then corrected. I am indebted to Kristina Baumann and Lisa Louis for doing this "in their spare time."

Each subject is defined, and then a format of questions and answers follows. I have tried to phrase the patient/family questions and my responses as close as possible to my actual experiences in twenty- seven years of practice. Some of these questions and answers may seem simple; others may seem very complicated; this is the nature of the subject. I have, at all times, tried to make it understandable to the non-medical person. The glossary, too, may help a great deal with the understanding.

Over the years, the questions have stayed the same although new questions have arisen. The answers, in many instances, have changed and will continue to change, as there is further progress in the understanding and cure of these diseases.

I recommend that the reader read the general chapter on Blood before reading any other subject in the book. The chapter on Anemia should be read before reading any other chapters on specific anemias.

The chapter on Genetics (Hopefully Simple Genetics) should help in understanding the hereditary disorders, such as Sickle Cell Disease, Thalassemia, Hemophilia, Von Willebrand's Disease, Hereditary Hemolytic Anemia, G-6-PD Deficiency and Hemochromatosis.

The chapters on Transfusion and Bone Marrow Transplantation are included because there is frequent use of both of these therapies in patients with diseases involving the blood and bone marrow.

If, for some reason, your question is not found in this book, ask the attending physician or seek out someone who can answer the question.

Some of these problems are temporary nuisances. Others are tragic and life threatening, but all can be explained. It is hoped that these explanations will help to allay some of the anxiety that comes with these illnesses.