



Press Release
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Blood and Cells Advocacy Roster (BCAR) Launches to Provide Joint Voice for the Blood Industry

- **New advocacy group aims to advance pace of change for patient access to cell and gene therapies and blood therapies**
- **BCAR to host a roundtable discussion on how the blood industry could function as a 'network of networks' to solve some of the CGT industry challenges at Phacilitate's Advanced Therapies Week in January 2025**

Wyoming, US, December 11, 2024 – The Blood and Cells Advocacy Roster (BCAR), an industry consortium of blood therapy and cell and gene therapy starting materials stakeholders, launches today to function as a think-tank plus speaker advocacy group. The international organization aims to drive the narrative on the importance of the established blood industry, particularly to help improve patient access to advanced therapies. BCAR will collaboratively propose solutions to tackle the complex challenges that could otherwise throttle development and commercial availability of life-saving cell and gene therapies.

Blood is recognized by the World Health Organization as an essential medicine. The blood industry's infrastructure has been relied on for decades to manufacture and deliver blood-based therapies like transfusion and red blood cell exchange. These are safe, accepted clinical approaches to treat many diseases and conditions. More recently, the emergence of cell and gene therapies (CGTs) – often-curative treatments for dangerous diseases like late-stage blood cancers – has expanded the widespread reliance on blood systems, as a means of providing sources for starting materials. But the biopharma industry has been racing to keep up with demand, and struggling to manufacture them affordably, even while new therapies continue to reach the market for more diseases.

BCAR is working to help increase access to donor materials and reduce manufacturing costs by leveraging proven technology, networks, and expertise honed over generations of blood collection. The collective can propose solutions related to source variability, donor access limitations, and reliance on hospitals with limited capacity – issues that have caused manufacturing delays and put entire CGT development programs at regulatory or commercial risk. The blood industry has been collaborating to solve challenges for over a century, creating 'a network of networks' that the healthcare industry can foster and learn from. Through a stakeholder consortium, BCAR is positioned to help accelerate and expand patient access, improving and even saving lives.

"Blood providers have always been a crucial part of our healthcare system, often working behind the scenes. We believe we have both an opportunity and an obligation to take a more prominent role in supporting the healthcare ecosystem and advancing the field of cell and gene therapy," said Becky Butler Cap, Senior Vice President of Biotherapies at Vitalant. "Techniques we've pioneered, and technologies we've refined, have already been instrumental in therapeutic development, and are regularly used before, during, and after treatment. We see many opportunities to leverage our expertise and resources to help more people get better treatments, faster."

"In the U.S., fewer than 5% of hospitals have the experience and capabilities needed to manage and administer advanced cellular therapies. This means that, even under the best conditions, the vast majority of patients cannot access these treatments," said Jeff Wren, VP, Biotherapies for Association for the Advancement of Blood & Biotherapies (AABB). "Community blood centers have been true partners to hospitals, supporting established cell therapies such as blood transfusions and hematopoietic stem cell transplants. Today, they possess the capacity, expertise, and reach to accelerate treatment access across communities, along with a culture of urgency to meet patient needs in a rapidly changing market."

The inaugural BCAR steering committee founded by Michelle Boxall, CEO at IB Communications, includes representatives from blood and tissue networks, technology providers, and biotherapy communities:

- AABB
- BioBridge Global
- Blood Centers of America (BCA)
- OrganaBio
- Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies
- Vitalant

Over the coming year, BCAR will expand to incorporate other types of stakeholders, both within the U.S. and internationally, to foster idea exchanges that can lead to problem-solving and best practices in various regions.

BCAR will host a roundtable on how the blood industry could function as a 'network of networks' to solve some of the CGT industry challenges at Phacilitate's Advanced Therapies Week 2025 on Wednesday, January 22nd, 2025, at 9 a.m. in Theater 3.

About Blood and Cells Advocacy Roster (BCAR)

The Blood and Cells Advocacy Roster (BCAR) is an industry collaboration between blood and tissue collection networks, related technology providers, biotherapy communities, and other stakeholders with an interest in driving the narrative on the importance of blood and increasing patient access to life-saving blood and advanced therapies. The steering committee includes members from Association for the Advancement of Blood & Biotherapies (AABB), BioBridge Global, Blood Centers of America (BCA), OrganaBio, Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, and Vitalant.