

# Plasma donors:

## Volunteers help produce life-saving products and prevent dangerous disease in infants

By KATHI DODSON  
Collegian Staff Writer

Plasma-donating for pay may not be everyone's idea of an ideal way to earn extra money, but without donations, many life-saving medical products would not be available. Allen Lee, general manager of Sera-Tec Biologicals, 120 rear S. Allen St., said the company collects paid plasma donors. The collection process is similar to donating whole blood except the donor's blood cells are returned.

Donated plasma is converted to a variety of medicines that cannot be produced outside the body, Lee said.

One important product is albumin which is used to treat shock and burn victims and patients who have lost vital blood proteins, Lee said. Anti-hemophilia factor, used to treat people whose blood fails to clot normally, is another life-saving plasma product.

Immune globulins — used to protect people against diseases like tetanus, rubella and

hepatitis — can also be extracted from donated plasma, he said.

A plasma product can also help prevent Rh disease in infants, Lee said. The Rh factor is a protein on the surface of red blood cells. When a woman with the Rh negative protein has an Rh positive baby, she develops antibodies in her blood stream to protect her against the baby's Rh positive blood, he said.

In future pregnancies, these antibodies in the mother's blood could destroy a baby's Rh positive blood. Plasma products are used to prevent the mother from forming these potentially dangerous antibodies, Lee said. Volunteer plasma donors are able to donate as often as twice a week because their bodies will replace the lost plasma within 24 to 48 hours, Lee said.

Before donating, volunteers are given a full physical examination by a physician who asks a series of questions about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and other facts such as blood pressure, medical history,

and recent illness, he said.

The doctor will also check for physical signs of AIDS including enlarged lymph nodes and lesions, Lee said.

Plasma donation is similar to giving whole blood, Lee said. Donors are at no risk of contracting AIDS through the process. However, people with AIDS can pass the syndrome on through their plasma.

Members of the high risk groups, including homosexual and bisexual men and intravenous drug users, are asked to defer voluntarily, Lee said.

"The (AIDS) scare itself did produce a reduction in the number of (blood and plasma) donations, which made the demand for whole blood and plasma go up even higher. People need to be assured that that's not one of the ways in which you contract AIDS," Lee said.

Red Cross efforts to relieve the fear of contracting AIDS through blood donations has also helped Sera-Tec, he said. "I think one of the things we failed to get

across . . . is the fact that there are still people who believe that we use supplies (such as needles) more than once," Lee said. "I've been working for Sera-Tec for 12 years and in the 12 years I've been working here, I've never seen a supply that you're capable of using more than once."

The equipment used to collect the plasma is a closed, sterile system and the blood cells never come in contact with the air, he said. Initially, donors give one pint of blood, which is spun so the lighter plasma will rise to the top while the red blood cells and other cellular materials sink, Lee said. The plasma is then drawn off.

The blood cells — including white blood cells — are mixed with a saline solution and returned to the donor, he said. The saline solution replaces fluid lost in the donation process. This helps to prevent the fatigue or dizziness sometimes associated with donating whole blood.

A second pint of blood is then taken and the procedure repeated, Lee said. The entire

procedure lasts between one and a half and two hours.

Some plasma donors report minor side effects, Lee said, adding that a bruise may develop where the needle pierces the vein. Lee said donors are compensated for their time but, "we don't like to say that we pay donors for the actual plasma. I don't think it's something we could put a price tag on."

Donors receive \$10 for their initial donation and \$12 for further donations, he said, adding that 95 percent of all donations are from students.

Joseph Rosen, vice president and general manager of Sera-Tec, said the company has 11 plasma centers in seven states and collects about 300,000 pints of plasma per year. Lee said three Sera-Tec centers are located in Pennsylvania.

After plasma is collected, Rosen said Sera-Tec sells it to pharmaceutical companies like Baxter Labs and Cutter Labs, which produce final plasma products for hospitals, physicians, and drug stores.

# No contest plea entered in area rape trial

By GREGORY W. BORTZ  
Collegian Staff Writer

A State College man on trial yesterday for an attempted rape charge, pleaded no contest to a simple assault charge as the Centre County district attorney dropped other charges against him because he was scheduled for sentencing on a previous rape conviction.

**'By pleading no contest, we are just saying Thomas couldn't make a good case for the defense.'**

— Joseph Amendola

The counsel for Daniel C. Thomas, 921 Old Boalsburg Road, plea bargained with the prosecution on the grounds that Thomas was intoxicated the night he allegedly tried to rape a 23-year-old State College woman and

his sentences would run concurrently.

In the pre-trial plea bargaining, District Attorney Ray Gricar agreed to drop several charges against Thomas, including attempted rape, burglary, criminal trespassing and aggravated assault, in exchange for Thomas pleading no contest to the assault charge.

Thomas's attorney, Joseph Amendola of State College, said pleading no contest does not mean pleading guilty.

By pleading no contest, we are just saying Thomas couldn't make a good case for the defense," Amendola said.

Judge David Grine said he accepted the plea because Thomas has yet to be sentenced for a rape conviction from Aug. 30. Thomas was convicted of raping a 19-year-old University student shortly after he was arraigned by District Judge Clifford Yorks for the charges in yesterday's trial.

Grine said if Thomas was convicted for the rape of the University student

Amendola said the prosecution had circumstantial evidence against Thomas, including identification by the taxi driver, and a bracelet that was found in the woman's apartment and identified as belonging to Thomas.

Thomas is now being held in Centre County Prison pending sentencing on the University student rape conviction.

The woman testified she was intoxicated that night and did not recall everything that transpired.

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