

Our press release on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010

## **“STAGGERING” NEW FIGURES REVEAL HIGH NUMBERS OF YOUNG DYING FROM BLOOD CLOTS**

New figures published today show that **blood clots in the under 40’s have claimed over 1000 deaths in the last four years.** Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) sheds light on the extent of fatalities, with deaths in the under 50’s totalling almost 3000.

The ONS data, sourced by Lifeblood: The Thrombosis Charity, reveals that between 2005 – 2008, the period for which statistics are available, 1075 people 40 years old and under died as a result of a deep vein thrombosis. The condition, affecting people of any age, also claimed the lives of **60 teenagers and children** over the same period (2005-2008). Meanwhile, deaths of people in their **twenties** are far higher-than expected. In 2008 alone, the ONS found that 62 people between the ages of 21-30 died after developing a blood clot: a figure that rises to 256 when all deaths between 2005-2008 are accounted for.

Professor Beverley Hunt, Director of Lifeblood and leading haematologist, said:

**“The statistics are staggering. The UK’s medical community needs to urgently explore why these healthy young people are dying in their 1000s from this completely preventable illness. We are worried that trainee doctors, nurses and midwives are not being given the basic mandatory training to spot signs of blood clots, and that is something that must be addressed urgently. Much more needs to be done to make sure that front-line medics properly recognise symptoms of deep vein thrombosis which, if not treated early, is an indiscriminate and devastating killer.**

**“Many people are under the impression that thrombosis is an older person’s illness. Yet for the first time we have the statistical evidence to show this is categorically not the case. We need to break the myth that thrombosis is only an old people’s condition or that you’re only likely to suffer from blood clots on planes.”**

An exclusive Comres poll of 2000 people, also published today, highlights poor public awareness and understanding about blood clots. More than half of people questioned said they thought the greatest risk of developing thrombosis was on a long haul flight, whilst 38 percent of 18-24 years olds said they thought thrombosis was a condition that ‘mainly affects older people’, compared with just 31percent who said it could affect people of all ages. Additionally, the poll conducted for Lifeblood found that half of all people questioned wanted to ‘know more about the risks associated with developing deep vein thrombosis’.

### Hospital-acquired thrombosis:

Many of these young people are the victims of so-called community-acquired thrombosis. However, we also know that two thirds of deaths are caused by hospital-acquired thrombosis. Research also published by Lifeblood, shows that blood clot prevention in hospitals is not being given the financial backing of Government, despite being identified as a national priority for hospitals in 2010. This year the Government will spend just £192,000 on blood clot prevention, compared to the £24.5m to tackle hospital acquired infections it spent in 2009. The figures, uncovered in a series of parliamentary questions, highlight the ongoing underfunding of thrombosis prevention in hospitals.

Hospital-acquired blood clots alone, cause an estimated 25,000 preventable deaths each year. As the immediate cause of death in 10% of all patients who die in hospital<sup>1</sup>, **blood clots are the number one greatest cause of preventable hospital mortality.** This death rate is greater than the combined total of deaths from breast cancer, AIDS and traffic accidents and is two to three times greater than the total of all hospital acquired infections, estimated at 10,000 deaths per year.

The Government has highlighted hospital-acquired blood clot prevention as a priority for the NHS for the next five years. **Yet**, parliamentary questions recently published demonstrate that **no money has been allocated centrally** for the ‘Venous Thromboembolism Exemplar Centre Network’, a group set up by the Department of Health to allow hospitals to share best practice in thrombosis prevention. In addition, no funding has been earmarked for training and resources for those involved in the prevention of the condition, and no education has been stipulated for undergraduate medical students.

- **About Lifeblood:** The Thrombosis Charity is an independent charity dedicated to the condition of thrombosis. The charity’s aim is two-fold: to advance medical science in relation

to the diagnosis, causes, prevention, alleviation, management and cure of thrombosis; and to provide public education on the understanding and awareness of thrombosis. For more information please visit our website at [www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk](http://www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk)

- **About National Thrombosis Week:** It is a week-long awareness raising campaign to increase understanding about thrombosis amongst the public and to help educate the medical community about how to effectively spot and risk-assess patients for thrombosis. As part of a national tour Lifeblood is visiting medical campuses in London, Birmingham, Belfast, Glasgow and Sheffield.
- **Data:** The FOI data cited refers to England and Wales only.

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<sup>i</sup> House of Commons, Second report of Session 2004 – 5; The Prevention of Venous Thromboembolism in Hospitalised Patients