Red Cross Sees Red After Millions in Fines

April 2, 2012 By Cristina Gonzalez

In January the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fined the American Red Cross, the biggest U.S. supplier of donated blood, almost $10 million for allegedly failing to abide by blood safety rules. Since 2003, the Red Cross has been cited 14 times for safety violations and fined about $46 million for alleged breaches of safety. According to the FDA, safety changes have not yet been made.

In a letter sent to the Red Cross, the FDA stated that the organization failed to adequately train staff on blood safety requirements and neglected to maintain a national database of donors disqualified from giving blood. Though the Red Cross has yet to answer requests regarding its blood screening policy or the percentage of blood it finds unusable, the organization maintains the U.S. blood supply is not compromised. And despite the fines, the FDA hasn't found any evidence that the Red Cross's safety lapses have led to any serious health consequences for blood recipients. But with more than 10 years of citations and millions of fines already levied, we wonder: Will it take a public health scare for the Red Cross to finally clean up its act?

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