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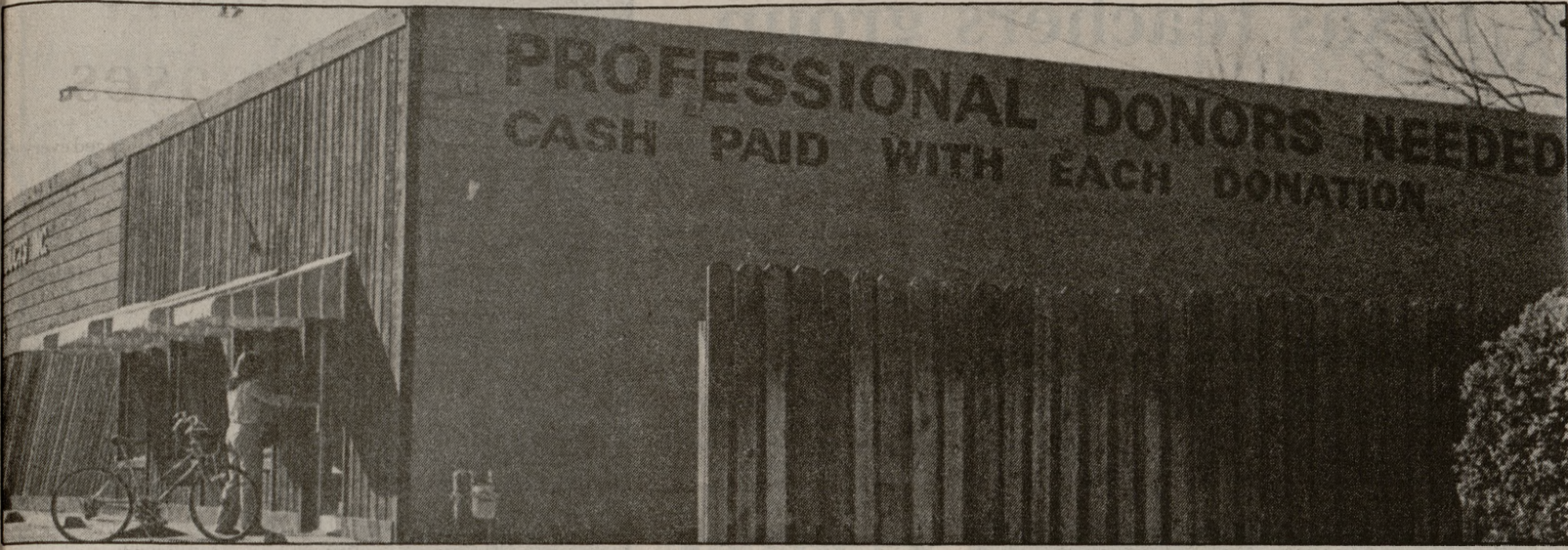


Photo by Wang Borchwen

Plasma Products Inc. of Texas, located on Old College Main, takes donors year round. Avis Ramirez, manager of the donation center, said they pay \$8 in cash for approximately 650 ml. of plasma. Giving one unit of blood takes about 1 1/2 hours. Nausea and sweating sometimes accompany the donation.

Giving plasma is rewarding, tedious

By FRANK L. CHRISTLIEB
Battalion Reporter

For five years a small, cinder block building on Old College Main has been a source of spending money for Texas A&M University students who aren't appalled by blood or sharp needles.

At Plasma Products Inc. of Texas a student can spend a work-free 1 1/2 hours donating plasma — and receive \$8 for doing it.

Open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, the center currently employs a staff of five women trained to prepare donors, to withdraw blood and to separate plasma from it. None of these staff members are doctors or nurses. They've had only on-the-job training.

Manager Avis Ramirez said even though the center is open to people between 18 and 65, about 99.9 percent of the donors are college students.

A donor must also have a certain pulse rate, temperature and blood pressure, which are each taken every time he comes in. A donor must weigh at least 110 pounds, although there is no upper limit on weight.

Each donor goes through the same steps to give plasma:

— A prospective donor must pass a physical, given by one of two doctors who are at the center twice a week, before he can donate.

— The donor must then make an appointment to give plasma.

— Blood pressure, temperature and weight are taken when the donor comes in.

— About a pint of blood is taken out of one arm intravenously while the donor is lying down.

— The donor's name and a designated number are put on the plastic bag the blood flows into.

— The bag is put into a refrigerated centrifuge which spins the blood at about 5,000 rpm, causing the red blood cells to settle at the bottom of the bag and the plasma cells to float to the top.

— The plasma is siphoned out of the bag into a sterile bottle while the blood cells are mixed with a saline solution and returned to the donor.

— This entire process is repeated so that a total amount of one unit of plasma is withdrawn.

Ramirez said a person can give plasma only twice a week, and if he donates twice, there must be a minimum of 48 hours between the two donations. She said the center recently changed its donation policy, which now requires that donors make appointments to give plasma, whereas before, they could donate whenever they wanted to.

One reason for this, she said, is the price of plasma has gone down, so the companies who buy the plasma are paying the center

less for it. This has caused the center to take less donors and to reduce the payment from \$10 to \$8.

Dr. John Moore, an A.P. Beutel Health Center staff member who gives physicals at the plasma center, said the price has gone down because "the supply of plasma is overtaking the demand for it."

He said these privately-owned centers are increasing in number, causing a large increase of available plasma.

Possible dangers in the plasma-giving process include mix-ups during blood transfer, the development of hematomas, swellings which may form if blood does

not flow freely back into veins.

Dr. C.B. Goswick, director of the health center, said there are risks in the program, but the dangers are remote and problems are "few and far between."

Some donors may experience reactions during the process, including pallor, faintness, nausea or sweating. Goswick said these are only "minor discomforts" which accompany normal blood and plasma donations.

The center is licensed by the Food and Drug Administration and receives a "surprise inspection" once a year, Ramirez said. Ted Krum, a Texas A&M stu-

dent who donates twice-a-week, said giving plasma doesn't hurt,

although it "feels cold going back into the arm."

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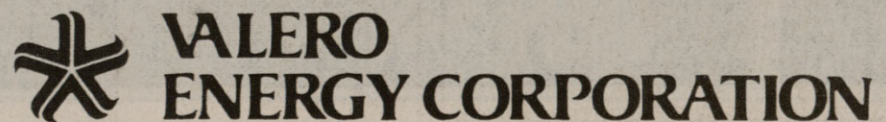
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