Abbott, Blood Centers Of America Launch First-Of-Its-Kind Mixed Reality Experience For Use During Blood Donation

- Mixed reality offers donors an innovative, immersive digital experience while giving blood
- The Abbott technology is one of the first-ever, consumer-focused mixed reality applications completely controlled through eye tracking
- Innovation aims to improve the experience and attract new, younger blood donors by adding an element of high-tech mixed reality

LAS VEGAS, Jan. 6, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Abbott (NYSE: ABT) and Blood Centers of America are unveiling an innovative new mixed reality experience for use during blood donation.

The mixed reality technology is an immersive digital experience designed to improve the blood donation process, attract new donors and motivate a younger generation to give blood. The effort intends to address the global challenge of sustaining a reliable blood supply.

"This innovative use of mixed reality is the most recent example of how Abbott is creating leading-edge technology to address a key health care need in the world – maintaining the blood supply," said Alex Carterson, divisional vice president, medical, scientific and clinical affairs, Abbott. "Not only is it an immersive and unique use of mixed reality controlled completely through eye tracking, it's a high-tech and creative way to improve the donation experience and make it more appealing for people to participate."

The mixed reality experience allows blood donation professionals to safely conduct the donation and interact with donors at every step of the process. Donors' eyes are always visible during donation to ensure constant monitoring and evaluation. Participants wear lightweight mixed reality headsets to enter a digital world but remain fully aware of their surroundings, ensuring a seamless, convenient and safe donation.

Abbott, a global leader in screening blood and plasma, is partnering with Blood Centers of America, the largest blood supplier network in the U.S., to introduce this new technology which was first showcased during CES (the Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas.

The mixed reality experience was designed based on research that natural settings are the most preferred environment as donors give blood. Participants visit a whimsical garden while listening to soothing music, planting seeds that grow into colorful trees and flowers.

The experience is currently being piloted on a limited basis at select Blood Centers of America locations nationwide.

One of the biggest challenges facing the sustainability of our nation's blood supply over the last decade is the loss of a significant portion of donors under the age of 30. On average only 3% of the U.S. population donates blood each year, and a recent poll of U.S. adults showed that only 15% of 18-to-34-year-olds donated blood in 2020.

"We're always looking for ways to cultivate the next generation of blood donors and find younger people interested in giving," said Harpreet K. Sandhu, CEO, Stanford Blood Center (Palo Alto, Calif.) and chairperson of Blood Centers of America. "Some people are hesitant to donate for a variety of reasons or just don't think about giving blood. Since the need for blood is constant, we're continually looking for smart new ways that will appeal to people who have never donated before or may be apprehensive. The mixed reality experience is a terrific way to get those people interested in participating. It adds a fun, interactive element to donation and it's easy and convenient for blood centers to use."

Mixed reality is similar to virtual reality but allows users to see the real world around them as they immerse themselves in a digital world, whereas in virtual reality, users only experience the digital world. The mixed reality journey uses Microsoft HoloLens 2, the world's first self-contained holographic computer, enabling hands-free interaction with three-dimensional digital objects and a library of applications. Donors are offered a quick tutorial on the headsets and the mixed reality world prior to use. The headsets can be adjusted for each donor's comfort and are easily integrated into the donation process.

"At Microsoft, we've seen the impact digital technologies can have in healthcare – from empowering health team collaboration and increasing clinician productivity to enhancing the patient experience," said David C. Rhew, M.D., global chief medical officer and vice president of healthcare, Microsoft. "We're pleased to see Abbott embrace mixed reality to create a positive experience for blood donors and to encourage the public to donate."

As part of the effort to launch this new technology, BCA and Abbott are asking people to pledge to donate blood now and sign up to be notified when the mixed reality experience becomes available in their local area. To learn more about becoming a regular donor and pledge to donate, visit bethe1donor.com/CES.

About Abbott

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