



2019 Christmas Appeal – It's time to talk about bleeding

Can you imagine what it's like missing school days because you have bled out in the classroom and despite having a wonderful best friend who lent you her coat to cover up, everybody noticed. But you don't bleed out when you have haemophilia or von Willebrand's, do you? It's a myth about fountains of blood spurting and people losing blood from cuts.



No you're right, it's not really a thing – unless you're a woman with a bleeding disorder that is, and then simple everyday life can mean that you go prepared with a kit bag of sanitary products 'just in case'.

Now, this is supposed to be a cheerful Christmas appeal to help raise money to support our work, but the reality of what **#OurCommunity** goes through, especially women, was felt to be too important to skip over. Women's bleeding disorders in particular can have a huge impact mentally, physically and financially. Yet many people still don't know that women can be affected by bleeding disorders. Recent figures from the UKHCO suggest that actually there are more women now in the UK with a genetic bleeding disorder than men.

Let's get Talking Red

Several years ago we re-established our women's project as '**Talking Red**' to get everyone – men and women – to talk about women's bleeding to empower women, share knowledge and dispel myths. Through **Talking Red** we have started to reach and support women who never knew they had a bleeding disorder. They always thought something was wrong, from odd bruising, to very heavy periods, to extended bleeding after dentist's visits.

Gentlemen/ladies, if you made it this far we thank you – the women in our lives and our community are precious to us, just as you all are. Our wives, mums, girlfriends, partners, bosses, aunts, daughters – they are there when we need them. They may be a carrier, have mild haemophilia or type 3 VWD, but they go through similar issues if not worse than the guys do, and so **Talking Red** is getting a reboot.

Next year, to coincide with International Women's Day, our **Talking Red** awareness week takes place from 8 March 2020, finishing with our one-day free conference on 14 March in York which is open to all women affected by a bleeding disorder. It's time for us to talk more about the realities of life for many of our community, and so it's time to talk about period poverty as well.

It's a big issue for women like Macey, 18, who live with a bleeding disorder, but live on a fixed income. She dropped out of doing her A levels, and lives in fear of not having enough money to pay for tampons each month. Turn over to read her story...

Can you help?

Please help us to raise awareness about women's bleeding disorders – this Christmas could you make a small (or big) donation to our Christmas **Talking Red** appeal? Together we can improve the quality of women's lives through promoting a better understanding of bleeding disorders and end the stigma of discussing women's bleeding disorders.

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Macey's story

Macey spends up to a fifth of her income on coping with her heavy periods caused by a bleeding disorder. Living on a fixed income, Macey, 18, says it is 'degrading' to constantly deal with the stress of whether she'll have enough money left every month to cover the cost of her periods.



Macey said: "I get my money through at the beginning of the month, my period usually comes between the 24th and the 26th so throughout that month I am always panicking that I have not saved enough money to be able to buy the stuff I need. It's not just pads, it's constantly buying new bedding or buying protective covers for your mattress or buying new pants."

Macey has lived with heavy periods since the age of 11 and experienced nosebleeds as a child. She was put on the pill at 14 in an attempt to deal with her excessive bleeding but the treatment led to feelings of anxiety and nausea. When a routine eye check showed up blood clots in her head her treatment was stopped and she was diagnosed with von Willebrand disease soon afterwards.

Coping with a bleeding disorder at school can be difficult and Macey remembers crying because she was too scared to ask teachers if she could go to the toilet. Aged 14, she was humiliated by classmates after leaking during a lesson and refused to return to school for two weeks.

Recently Macey has gained the confidence to speak about her periods and feels strongly about the need to tackle period poverty and break down the stigma of discussing periods. Macey, who had to drop out of her A level studies last year, is about to start a BTEC in business and law believes, pads and tampons should be freely available for those who need them.

She said: "If you can get condoms on the NHS you should be able to get pads and tampons. No girl should have to stand in a toilet cubicle rolling up a piece of paper to put in her pants. It's not right. Just because you can afford pads and tampons doesn't mean everyone else can. We should respect and stand up for women who don't have the money to buy these things."

Help be the difference this Christmas... www.justgiving.com/campaign/ChristmasAppeal19

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