Newsletter: *American Society of Hematology*

How healthy is your blood? Millions of Americans are affected by blood disorders each year, some as life-threatening as cancer, others as common and treatable as anemia. Regardless of the condition, it is important to know about your risk factors, the symptoms, and prevention strategies.

Although blood diseases can affect anyone, certain people are more at risk. For example, anemia, a condition in which there are not enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen to the body's tissues, occurs more often in women who are pregnant. Heredity can play a role, too. Sickle cell disease is more commonly found among people of African, Hispanic, Mediterranean, and Indian descent, and genetic predispositions may increase a person's likelihood of developing certain blood conditions, such as hemophilia. For many conditions, behavioral factors can play a role. For example, smoking, obesity, hypertension, or even air travel may increase the risk of developing a blood clot.

"Many Americans have no idea that they are at risk for developing a blood disorder," said Kenneth Kaushansky, ASH President. "Knowing about blood diseases and conditions and what causes them is crucial to early detection, which is often the key to successful treatment."

Hematology, or the study of blood, has become one of the most intriguing and important sciences of the 21st century. Many scientists believe that blood is the vital connection to understanding many of today's most complex diseases. In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the American Society of Hematology is urging Americans to learn more about blood diseases, know their risk factors, and talk to their doctor about seeing a hematologist. For more information on blood conditions, visit *www.bloodthevitalconnection.com*.