Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Bruce Gulland and I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live.

James Harrison sits in a comfortable chair. He smiles and talks to the people around him. But there is something strange about why he is sitting. There is a thin sharp needle in his arm. It is connected by a long thin tube to a machine. James Harrison is giving blood. But this is not a normal blood donation. Harrison has given blood over one thousand times and his blood is very special. People have used Harrison’s blood to save over two million babies in Australia. Today’s Spotlight is on James Harrison and his amazing blood.

People who have had accidents or are having operations sometimes need more blood so many people around the world donate or give their blood. Hospitals give this blood to their patience. Most healthy people can safely give blood but Harrison has given a lot more blood than the average person. James Harrison turns 81 in 2018. He is now too old to give blood but he donated blood for more than sixty years. James Harrison told CNN about why he started giving blood:

“In 1951 I had a chest surgery where they removed a lung. I was 14. When I came out of the operation my father was explaining what had happened. He said I had received 13 liters of blood. My life had been saved by unknown people. My dad was a blood donor so I said when I am old enough I will become a blood donor”.

Soon after he started giving blood, doctors discovered his blood was different. Doctors could use substances in Harrison’s blood to prevent rhesus disease. Rhesus disease is a condition caused by differences in blood. Babies with rhesus disease can have serious health problems were even die. To understand rhesus disease there are something a person need to know about blood. All human blood is similar but there are different blood types called: O, A, B and AB. Each blood type is either rhesus negative or positive. For example, there is B positive blood and B negative blood. People who are rhesus negative cannot receive blood from people who are rhesus positive. Hospitals are very careful not to give people the wrong blood type. Rhesus disease happened when a mother is rhesus negative but her baby is rhesus positive. When this happens, the mother’s body may reject or attack the baby. An antibody is a substance in a person’s blood. The mother’s blood produces antibody to attack the baby’s cells inside her. Then a baby has rhesus disease. Baby with rhesus disease may have many health problems. Their inner organs and body systems do not work correctly. In many cases, they die. Jemma works for the Australian Red Cross blood service, she told CNN how this affected a country: “In Australia, until about 1967 there were thousands of babies dying each year. Doctors did not know why. It was awful. Women were having many miscarriages and babies were being born with brain damage. Australia was one of the first countries to discover of blood donor with this antibody. It changed everything at the time.

Doctors used the antibody they found to develop an injection. The injection is called anti-D. it is the only known way to fight rhesus disease. And the donor that … is talking about is James Harrison. Anti-D can only be made from the blood of particular donors like him. Doctors give injection of anti-D to pregnant women at risk of rhesus disease. This stops the mother’s body from attacking the baby’s cells. Then there is a much better chance of having a healthy baby. Millions of women need the injection. But only a few people have the antibodies needed to make anti-D in their blood. In some places in the world they do not even have the choice of receiving anti-D. In many countries, there is not enough information about rhesus disease. In 2018 researchers … did a study. They look at a rhesus disease as a major public health problem in developing country. They public an article in the Lancet, it states that rhesus disease is the cause of death of over one hundred and 15 thousand babies every year worldwide they hope that there will be more global research about this important issue.

Scientists and doctors have tried to make anti-D in the laboratory without blood but so far it has not worked, people still depend on blood donors. The Sydney Morning Herald reports that in Australia there are only around one hundred and fifty people to give blood to make anti-D and about 17% of Australia women are at risk. So James Harrison has been an important part of the blood program there for 60 years. Robin Barlow is the Rh program coordinator she first asks James to donate his blood for this cause. She told the Herald: “Every dose of anti-D ever made in Australia has James in it since the very first mother received her dose at Royal Prince Alfred hospital in 1967”.

James Harrison’s blood has a very high level of anti-D. This is properly because he received some of the wrong kind of blood during his surgery as a young man. But James Harrison was also willing to give. He gave blood every 2 weeks for most of his life. He is a hero in Australia. About 2.4 million babies were born healthy because of Harrison’s blood. People call him the man with the golden arm.

Over his sixty years James Harrison has donated blood over one thousand one hundred times. He spent half a day every 2 weeks with a sharp needle in his arm. He cannot donate anymore. But he hopes that other people will take his place. He told the Australian Red Cross: “I hope it is a record that someone breaks. That will mean they are dedicated to saving people’s life”

Have you ever given blood? Have you ever received someone blood? Do you think you would give blood to help someone else? Tell us what you think. You can leave a comment on our website or email us at [radio@radioenglish.net](mailto:radio@radioenglish.net). You can also comment on facebook at facebook.com/spotlightradio. The writers of this program was Rena Dam. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United Kingdom, the United States and from New Zealand. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again and read it on the internet at [www.radioenglish.net](http://www.radioenglish.net). This program is called: “The man with the golden arm”. Visit our website to download free official app for Android or Apple devices. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye