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Man with HIV a blood donor

Family left in the dark about grandfather's illness

SINGAPORE: He had been donating blood for more than 20 years and was a devout Buddhist who often urged his family to do the same to save lives.

It, therefore, came as a huge shock to the family of a 57-year-old man when they found out that not only had he contracted HIV from visiting prostitutes, but he had also broken the law by not declaring it when he donated blood.

The grandfather of one was sentenced to eight months in jail on Wednesday.

He cannot be named as a gag order has been issued by the court to protect his family.

"We know very little about what happened because he was too ashamed to tell us," said his son.

"But we believe that he would never donate blood if he knew that he was sick."

The Straits Times visited the family at their four-room flat in the west yesterday.

The son described his father as a simple man who did not have formal education, worked odd jobs as a forklift driver and doted on his four children and young granddaughter.

Although his father had fallen

out with his mother more than 10 years ago, they continued to live together.

They have been married for more than 30 years.

The man's wife said she was aware that he had girlfriends and female companions, but added that she chose not to bother about what he did with his time.

She found out that he had contracted HIV only in January last year after he was arrested for falsely declaring that he had not had multiple sex partners or visited a prostitute in the past year.

Two of her four children only found out in court on Wednesday. The man was caught when the blood he donated in November 2009 was found to be HIV-positive.

The Health Sciences Authority then looked back at his donation history and found he had made previous blood donations between July 20, 2008, and Aug 21, 2009.

But tests on those donations were negative for HIV. — *The Straits Times* / *Asia News Network*

We know very little about what happened because he was too ashamed to tell us.

— DONOR'S SON