

Private & Confidential

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Letter to all NORS Teams

Clinical Governance Team  
Newcastle Blood Centre  
Holland Drive  
Barrack Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 4NQ

Tel. 0191 2026626  
Fax. 0191 2026633  
Website: [www.nhsbt.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk)

Dear Friends

We are facing difficult times ahead. Donation and transplantation services are and will be affected.

A number of retrieval staff have raised concern regarding their personal risk of contracting COVID 19 during retrieval surgery. The health and safety of all the NORS teams is paramount. This is, of course, a rapidly evolving situation in the UK and internationally.

These are the steps we are undertaking and in addition we felt we should offer guidance.

1. **All confirmed COVID-19 patients are excluded from organ donation.**
2. All potential donors will be **screened by the SNOD on history** for an assessment of the likelihood of the patient being unknowingly at risk of COVID-19. This screening history also accounts for numbers of other patients in the ICU who are COVID-19 +’ve and if such infected patients are in isolation. If there is any concern, testing for COVID-19 will occur. This information is captured in a form that is made available at the time of offering.
3. We are rapidly moving to **testing all potential donors** for COVID-19 prior to retrieval. There are logistic difficulties and considerable regional variation in testing times (12-48 hours). Testing times should improve as laboratories increase their capacity and we are working hard to overcome logistic difficulties. Specialist Nurses will be advised re the practical steps to do this and obviously, if we are to test, then the sooner that can be properly done, the better.
4. The testing for donors which we are instituting will be more comprehensive than current standard ICU testing for COVID-19 and involve:
  - a. Nose and throat swab (molecular test) – current ICU standard
  - b. Endotracheal aspirate (molecular test) – additional respiratory test we are adding
  - c. Blood (for retrospective testing)

**It is important to note that the blood testing is for later use. Blood results will not be available at the time of donation. If both respiratory samples are negative donation processes can proceed, taking into account the extra risk information gathered by the SNOD noted at 2. above. Testing is based on currently available tools and knowledge.**
5. **Testing of donors** is solely for the purpose of improving safety in transplantation and providing reassurance; it **does not infer any suspicion of COVID-19 infection in these patients. Therefore the guidance would be that NO additional precautions to those usually employed** during retrieval are required.

We take solace that we have heard from colleagues in Italy and Spain where donation and transplantation has continued despite the overwhelming nature of the pandemic.

**Please look after yourself, your family, your colleagues and your patients.**



**Dr Dale Gardiner**  
**National Clinical Lead for Organ Donation**  
**NHS Blood and Transplant**



**Mr Ian Currie**  
**National Clinical Lead Organ Retrieval**  
**NHS Blood and Transplant**



**Mr Marius Berman**  
**Associate National Clinical Lead Organ Retrieval**  
**NHS Blood and Transplant**



**Dr Ines Ushiro-Lumb**  
**Consultant Doctor**  
**NHS Blood and Transplant**