

NHSBT: Blood Supply and Demand Challenges

21 October 2020

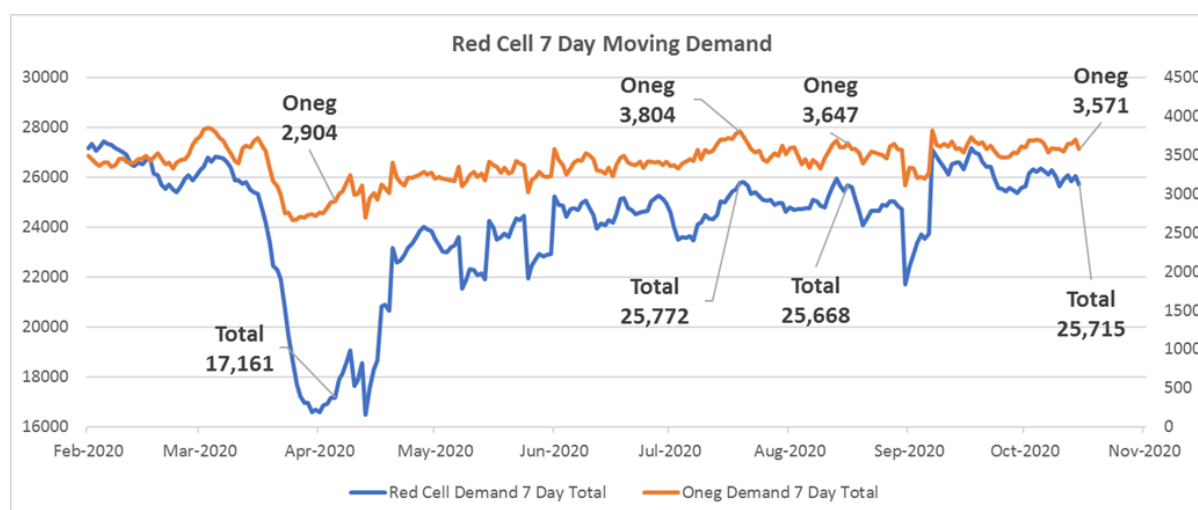
To: Transfusion Laboratory Managers, Transfusion Practitioners, Consultant Haematologists with responsibility for Blood Transfusion, Hospital Transfusion Committee Chairs

Dear Colleague

As we are now experiencing a second wave of Covid-19, we felt it important to provide an update on our blood stocks and hospital demand.

Our overall blood stock levels are sufficient to meet current demand, we are facing ongoing challenges in collecting the required units of red cells on a daily basis and our stock position is currently lower than target. Whilst we are doing all that we can to maximize our collection activity, we are concerned that we may experience supply issues in the coming weeks and therefore request that hospitals ensure their Emergency Blood Management Arrangements (EBMA) plans are up to date.

Demand for O D negative remains of particular concern. Currently representing 14% of total demand, this is higher than the usual figure of 13%.



We are requesting your ongoing help to minimize the risk of blood shortages over the coming weeks.

1. Stock Management

- Please ensure stock targets are appropriate to meet local demand and where possible, operate a “first in, first out” policy for issue of red cell components; this will assist in preserving O D negative red cells and minimise transfusion to avoid time expiry.
- Limit over specification of O D negative red cell requests unless a patient specific requirement.
- Limit requests for “fresh red cells” and take a proportional share of K+ units. We are currently issuing red cells at 23 days’ age at issue, and beyond to a

Blood and Transplant

small number of hospitals. This will be extended if our stock position further declines.

- Accept substitutions, where clinically appropriate.
- The National Blood Transfusion Committee Laboratory Managers Group have this week produced information about appropriate specification for emergency red cells. This, and a number of tools to assist with stock management can be found [here](#)

Plans to extend the shelf life of red cells to 42 days are currently being considered by NHSBT and other stakeholder groups. We will send further communications regarding this if we need to move to implementation.

2. Intelligence to support NHSBT demand forecasting

- Anticipating component demand remains a constant challenge. We rely on you to keep us updated with any changes in your hospital activity that may result in a change in demand for blood components.
- Please email any intelligence to covid19bloodrecovery@nhsbt.nhs.uk or discuss with your local PBM Practitioner or Hospital Customer Service Manager.

3. Appropriate Use of Blood Components

- There are a number of tools available to support decisions to administer transfusions and to consider alternatives to blood.
- Tools include an 'app' summarising national clinical indications for transfusions and the Patient Blood Management toolkit. Please follow this link: <https://hospital.blood.co.uk/patient-services/patient-blood-management/education/>

Please raise awareness at your Hospitals Transfusion Committees for discussion and communication to clinical colleagues.

Thank you in anticipation of your ongoing support during this very challenging time for the NHS.

Kind regards,
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