COVID - 19 Bulletin Number 27

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Directorate

08 January 2021
Message from Professor Derek Manas

Dear Colleague,

Happy New Year! I hope you all managed to enjoy the somewhat different festivities and get some well-earned rest. As we are now once again in national lockdown, we as a team are continuing to support organ donation and transplantation across the country to ensure we can facilitate donation and transplantation as far as possible given the pandemic. I am immensely proud of everything we are doing as a team, continuing with activity as we are doing is truly remarkable.

2020 was an exceptionally challenging year – I want to thank you all again for everything you all did to make a difference. I know there are challenging weeks ahead but hoping we can all continue to support the service as best we can.

Derek Manas

COVID-19 activity summary

As at 7th January 2021

The Clinical Team meeting reviewed that latest COVID – 19 activity data. Prior to Christmas we did see a decrease in deceased donors and transplants – this has slowly started to pick up again. We will of course need to be keep a close eye on how things progress during the current wave and ensure we continue to keep all our guidance updated to enable donation and transplantation to take place wherever possible.

Transplant Programmes: Issues for Consideration for Future Infection Surges

This policy has been updated and is available on the clinical website or here as always thanks to the clinical team for their input in this review.
Living Donation
Living donation activity has been significantly impacted in the current phase of the pandemic, with some centres forced to close their programmes, either partially or completely, due to local and regional COVID-19 restrictions. Where logistically possible, selected living donor transplants, including kidney sharing scheme exchanges identified in the October matching run, are being considered on the basis of individual risk assessment.

Full details of centre restrictions can be found here

To help us keep the website information up to date, please could all centres report any changes to the status of their living donation (LD) programmes (adults and children) to NHSBT via the relevant Advisory Group Chair (see below), copied to lisa.burnapp@nhsbt.nhs.uk, specifying the following:

**Fully open:** for LD surgery and new donor referrals

**Open for selected donors/recipients:** e.g. UKLKSS exchanges; new donor referrals

**Paused:** no LD surgery or new donor referrals for up to 14 days

**Closed:** no LD surgery or new donor referrals (anticipated for longer than 14 days)

Kidney Advisory Group Rommel.ravanan@nbt.nhs.uk or Frank.dor@nhs.net
Liver Advisory Group douglas.thorburn@nhs.net

Enquiries from potential living donors
Where restrictions are in place, it would be helpful if living donor coordinators added an automatic reply to their usual inbox for receiving ‘Expressions of Interest’ from people willing to donate indicating that there may be delays in communicating with them. This would pre-empt enquiries, particularly from people considering non-directed altruistic donation who may not appreciate the limitations for acceptance of new referrals at this time.

Organ Allocation and Offering
Due to pressures across the NHS some units have had to pause transplant activity. An update on all centre closures and restrictions can be found at the link below:


*Please note that the situation is changing rapidly, we will endeavour to keep the website up to date in a timely manner.*

**LIVER:** Liver transplant activity remains paused/ restricted mainly in the south of the country. From today, 8th January 2021 we will not take consent from donors aged 65 years or over for DCD liver donation. This will expedite donor facilitation for ICUs and donor organ offering. We will review this over the coming days.

**RENA:** At the time of writing, there are also a number of renal centres that have had to pause transplant activity. Full information on the current status of the centres can be found on the link above. Due to the number of centres closed and the time taken to offer kidneys some changes to kidney offering has been agreed, a letter has been distributed to all centres today.
As outlined in the letter, we would ask that you please update your centre specific criteria – the letter includes all of the key dates and contacts, as it is important that we have the current information for each centre. Thank you for all your help.

**January key Timelines**

Deadline 15th January 2021

Changes will be implemented on the 19th January 2021

All changes to be sent to kidneyagecriteria@nhsbt.nhs.uk

**CARDIAC:** At the current time most, cardiac centres are continuing with transplant activity. We will continue to monitor over the coming days. We ask that if any centre closes or requires changes to acceptance criteria to notify NHSBT formally, via the Clinical governance team – clinicalgovernance.odt@nhsbt.nhs.uk This will enable us to make the changes required and inform the individuals who require to know internally.

**PANCREAS AND ISLETS:** Like other centres some Pancreas and Islet transplant centres have also paused their activity. Details can be found on the website following the link above.

**SMALL BOWEL/MULTI VISCERAL:** At the time of writing one centre has closed whilst all other centres remain open.

**Vaccination for COVID-19**

Both of the Medicines and Health Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) approved vaccines for COVID-19 are considered safe for use in recipients of solid organ transplants and those waiting for a transplant.

In the absence of any other health contra-indication, it is recommended that suitable recipients receive any of the approved vaccines when one is offered to them but continue to follow Government advice to reduce risk of infection, even when vaccinated. Invitation to attend for vaccination may come via GP practices or from hospitals and all patients may expect to receive their invitation by January/February 2021. Further guidance at the following links:

- **British Transplantation Society position statement:** [Click here](#)
- **MHRA guidance:** [Click here](#)
- **Government advice:** [Click here](#)

**Q and A’s - Vaccines for Waiting List patients and Transplant Recipients**

Q and A's are currently in development after extensive input from Ines Ushiro-Lumb and our Advisory Group chairs. Special thanks also to Julia Mackisack and Hazel Bentall our lay members who are currently in the progress of reviewing the content on behalf of the clinical team. We will upload Q and A’s on to the Microsite as soon as they are finalised and advise you that they are available for use via email.

**Patient AG Comms**

We understand that the surging numbers of coronavirus cases is a very worrying time for everyone, including patients who are anxiously waiting a transplant, transplant recipients, their families and friends. Our Advisory Group chairs have recently written to their patient groups and we would encourage patients to contact their local transplant unit with any concerns they may have.
Please find below a list of the external guidance and information published during December 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Last Update</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 rapid guideline: managing the long-term effects of COVID-19</td>
<td>NG188</td>
<td>18 December 2020</td>
<td>18 December 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 rapid guideline: vitamin D</td>
<td>NG187</td>
<td>17 December 2020</td>
<td>17 December 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>