

URGENT COMMUNICATION

Date: 23 July 2021

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

Dear colleagues,

Red cell stock update

NHSBT has worked hard over the Covid -19 pandemic to maintain blood stocks, however whilst our 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 as a result, our overall stock position is currently lower than target. In particular, our stock of **B D negative, O D negative and O D positive red cells** are low, and we are concerned about sufficiency of supply for these specific groups over the coming weeks.

Whilst we are doing all we can to maximize our collection activity, we are concerned that we may experience supply issues in the coming weeks and we suggest hospitals ensure their Emergency Blood Management Arrangements (EBMA) plans are up to date. We are not asking you to implement your emergency blood management plans at this stage but we are seeking your help now in the following areas to minimize the risk of blood shortages over the coming weeks.

1. Stock Management:

- Please review your stockholding of these groups and reduce where possible. A small reduction will make a significant difference
- Please use patient specific blood group wherever possible
- Accept substitutions, where clinically appropriate
- 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 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 small number of hospitals. This will be extended if our stock position further declines.
- Please accept shorter dated stock, where you are confident that you can use it. We will only issue this with your prior agreement.
- The National Blood Transfusion Committee Laboratory Managers Group have produced information about appropriate specification for emergency red cells. This and a number of tools to help stock management and they can be found here: <https://www.transfusionguidelines.org/document-library/documents/what-should-you-use-as-emergency-red-cells-final-pdf/download-file/What%20should%20you%20use%20as%20emergency%20red%20cells%20final.pdf>

2. Appropriate Use of Blood Components

There are a number of tools available to support decisions to administer transfusions and to consider alternatives to blood including 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/>

3. Information to support demand planning:

We continue to 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 information to covid19bloodrecovery@nhsbt.nhs.uk or discuss with your Hospital Customer Service Manager, or Patient Blood Management Practitioner. We are very grateful to those Trusts that are keeping us regularly updated and for the continued support of the National Transfusion Laboratory Managers Group.

Thank you in anticipation of your ongoing support

Please cascade to laboratory and clinical staff as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

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