

Blood and Transplant

TO: Transfusion Laboratory Manager, Transfusion Practitioner, Chair of HTC, Chair of RTC, Consultant Haematologist with Responsibility for Blood Transfusion and England EPRR.

4th November 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Urgent Red Cell Stock Update: we continue to have challenges with supply of red cells

Following on from our communication on 20th October 2021 we would like to provide a further update on challenges to supply of red cells.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect our ability to collect blood and although we are working hard to improve collections, we anticipate there will be ongoing supply challenges into early 2022.

Whilst our stock levels are sufficient to meet current demand, **we remain concerned about our stock levels of O D negative and O D positive red cells. In addition, A D positive red cells are lower than our stockholding target.**

Although we are not asking you to implement your Emergency Blood Management Plans (EBMP) at this stage, **it is important you ensure your EBMP arrangements are in place and that your EBMP group can be convened quickly if needed. This is in anticipation of a potential Amber alert should the situation not improve. Our stocks may remain vulnerable throughout November and December.** Please refer to the National Blood Transfusion Committee's guidance on stock shortages [here](#).

To support our ability to supply of group O and A D positive red cells and to avoid a potential shortage, we need you to take the following actions: -

Stock Management:

- Please review your stockholding of O D negative red cells, O D positive red cells and A D positive red cells and reduce your stock where possible. You may have done this at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to minimise wastage and then returned to pre-pandemic levels. Even a small reduction in stockholding in every hospital will make a significant difference overall.
- It is important that you enter daily red cell stock levels via the VANESA site as soon as possible. This will help us determine the quantities of red cells across the whole of the blood system.
- Please accept shorter dated red cells where you are confident that they can be used.
- Please also consider if it is safe to do so:
 - Reducing reservation periods

- Reducing levels of stock in remote fridges
- Reducing levels of irradiated stock and ordering more often
- Limiting requests for phenotyped units for stock and order on a named patient basis only

Appropriate Use of Blood Components:

- Please review your haemoglobin triggers for red cell transfusions with use of restrictive transfusions as per evidence based Patient Blood Management guidance.
- 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](#).

What is NHSBT doing to help maintain the sufficiency of supply?

We are taking additional measures to ensure sufficiency of blood component supply including:

- Contacting donors from key blood groups to encourage them to keep their appointments
- Prioritising appointments for group O donors
- Increasing appointment slots for donors and maximising attendance
- Increasing national and local media activity to promote all available appointments in our donor centres

NHSE communications

NHSE have been informed of the current stock challenges and will be communicating with trust Chief Executives to request their support for hospital transfusion teams.

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.

Thank you in anticipation of your ongoing support.

Please cascade to laboratory and clinical staff as appropriate.

Kind regards,

Dr Farrukh Shah
Medical Director for Transfusion
Email: NHSBTCustomerService@nhsbt.nhs.uk

Louise Sherliker
National Lead - PBM
Email: NHSBTCustomerService@nhsbt.nhs.uk

Chris Philips
Head of Hospital Customer Service
Email: NHSBTCustomerService@nhsbt.nhs.uk

