



NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE  
NORTH LONDON

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To All Consultant Haematologists

Re: Anti-HTLVIII testing of blood donations

You will probably have heard that the date for the introduction of routine anti-HTLVIII testing of all blood donations has been announced as October 14th. All blood donations taken on or after that date will undergo routine anti-HTLVIII testing, and no blood or blood components taken on or after that date will be released in advance of a negative anti-HTLVIII test, with one exception. The logistics of anti-HTLVIII testing combined with rapid release of fresh components (in particular platelets) are such that it will be difficult to continue our present practice of same-day release. We are trying our best to circumvent the problems, but the anti-HTLVIII test is more time consuming than other routine tests currently performed. It is anticipated therefore, that the time for release of platelets will be moved from 18.00-19.00 at present to midday the following day from next week. The only exception will be cell separator platelets which must be used on the day of donation. Platelet orders must therefore continue to be made as at present. On occasions it may be necessary to issue cell separator platelets in advance of a negative anti-HTLVIII result, but only where the donor has been tested and found negative within the last month.

We have severely run down stocks of FFP and cryoprecipitate over the last month, in anticipation of the start of testing. It is impossible to retrospectively test all stock currently held at the RTC, but field trials of the anti-HTLVIII tests have been carried out over the last few weeks, and a large proportion of the current stock of blood has already been tested. There will be no facility for return of untested blood or components, but it is anticipated that the overlap period will be short, except in the case of rare blood held as frozen units of red cells.

Such an important change in Blood Transfusion practice is bound to lead to hiccoughs; we do hope we have anticipated most of these, but trust you will bear with us at this difficult time.

GRO-C: Marcela Contreras

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