

20th April 2020

Hospital Transfusion Committee Chairs

RE: Safe Handling of Blood Products for Issue to Patients with Proven or Suspected COVID-19

We have encountered some variability in practice around the management and return of blood components and products for patients with known or suspected COVID-19. In order to remove uncertainty, we have introduced the following guidance for all blood banks and DHBs. I would be grateful if you would circulate this information to all relevant members of your clinical teams.

1. **Blood components and products for patients with known or suspected COVID-19 should be requested /issued from blood banks immediately prior to transfusion and not before.** This should minimise the risk that product will enter a COVID-19 ward area and not be transfused. In exception, where this is not considered possible, then a discussion with the Transfusion Medicine Specialist should allow a suitable plan to be made that will minimise wastage.
2. **Blood components and products should not be stored or held routinely (e.g.; in blood fridges) in clinical areas specifically allocated to the care of COVID-19 patients.** Blood components and products should be held in the blood bank or in other suitable clinical areas until the point of use.
3. **Blood components or products issued to patients with known or suspected COVID-19 that are not transfused SHOULD NOT be returned to blood banks.** They should be safely disposed of within the COVID-19 area into clinical waste. Blood bank should be informed that the unit has been discarded and not transfused. The only exception to this would be units with rare phenotypes or other special components, please discuss the handling of these units with the Transfusion Medicine Specialist.

Yours faithfully



DR SARAH MORLEY
Chief Medical Officer

cc: *All Blood Banks*
All Clinical Team
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