

# **Empowering transfusion laboratory staff**

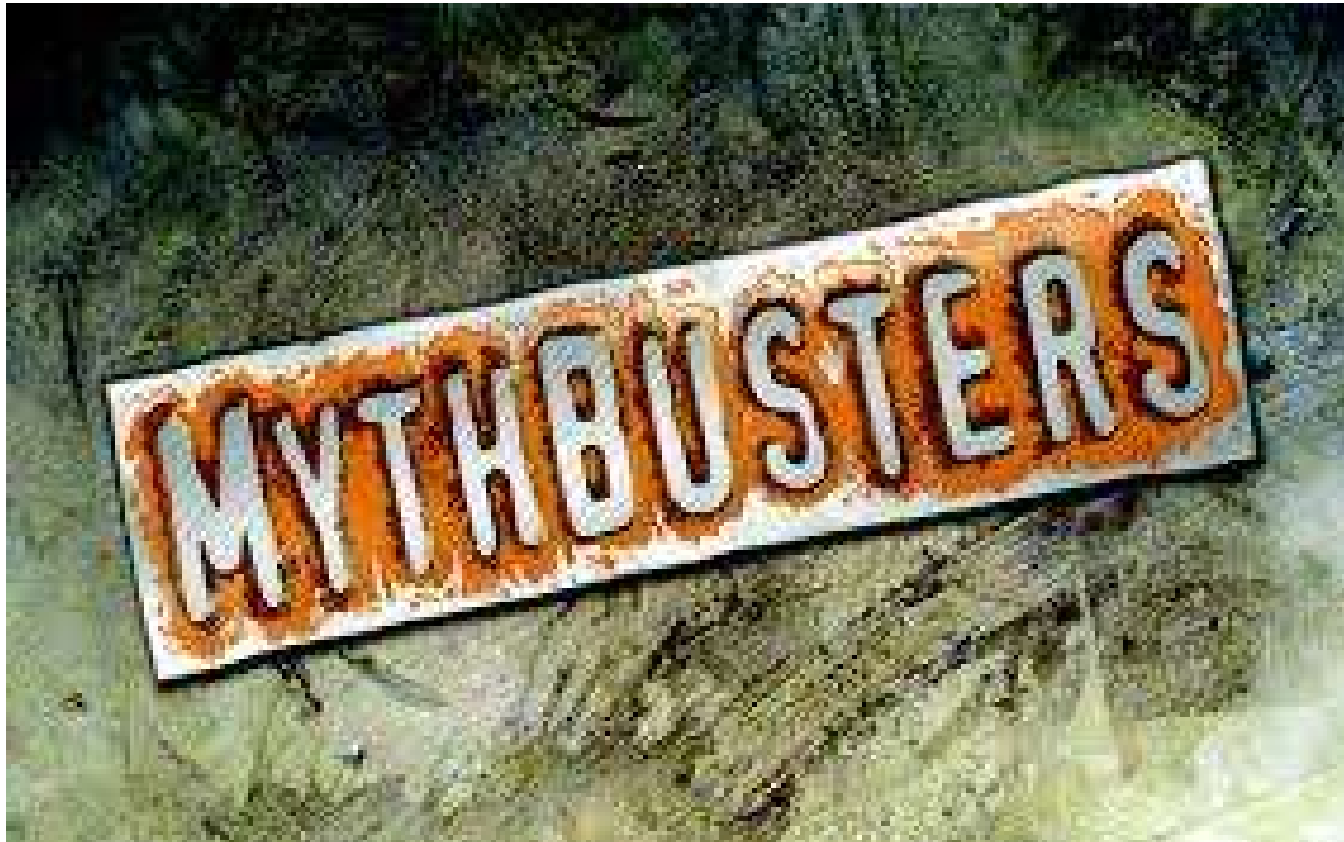
**Why do we need it and what are the barriers  
to overcome?**

Helen Maria  
Transfusion Specialist

# Obstacles

- Perceived role of the biomedical scientist?
- Senior laboratory team
- Support from haematology medical staff
- Transfusion committee and Trust board commitment

# Myths to bust!



# Myth 1

‘We’re just here to provide  
a service – no questions  
asked’

# Better Blood Transfusion 3



## Health Service Circular

Series Number: HSC 2007/001  
Gateway Reference: 9058  
Issue Date: November 2007

### Better Blood Transfusion *Safe and Appropriate Use of Blood*

- Avoid the unnecessary use of blood and blood components in medical and surgical practice

Objective	Action	By whom
Ensure the appropriate use of blood and the use of effective alternatives in every clinical practice where blood is transfused	• Implement existing national guidance (see Annex A) on the appropriate use of blood and alternatives	HTCs and HTTs working with clinicians

	• Establish local protocols to empower blood transfusion laboratory staff to ensure that appropriate clinical information is provided with requests for blood transfusion.	HTCs and HTTs working with clinicians, pathology managers and blood transfusion laboratories
	• Establish local protocols to empower blood transfusion laboratory staff to query clinicians about the appropriateness of requests for transfusion against local guidelines for blood use	HTCs and HTTs working with clinicians, pathology managers and blood transfusion laboratories

# Patient Blood Management (2014)

- Evidence-based **multidisciplinary team** approach to optimising the care of patients who might need transfusion
- Focuses on measures for blood avoidance as well as **correct use of blood components when needed**
- Improves patient care – **optimises use of donor blood** and reduces transfusion-associated risk
- Reduces financial costs

# Where do BMSs fit in to PBM?

- Collective responsibility to ensure appropriate use of blood:
  - PATIENT SAFETY
  - Blood conservation
  - Falling blood stocks
  - £££
- Need to be a service which advises and challenges to:
  - protect a vital and finite blood supply
  - Help prevent patients receiving inappropriate transfusions
  - Save money

# Myth 1

‘We’re just here to provide a service – no questions asked’

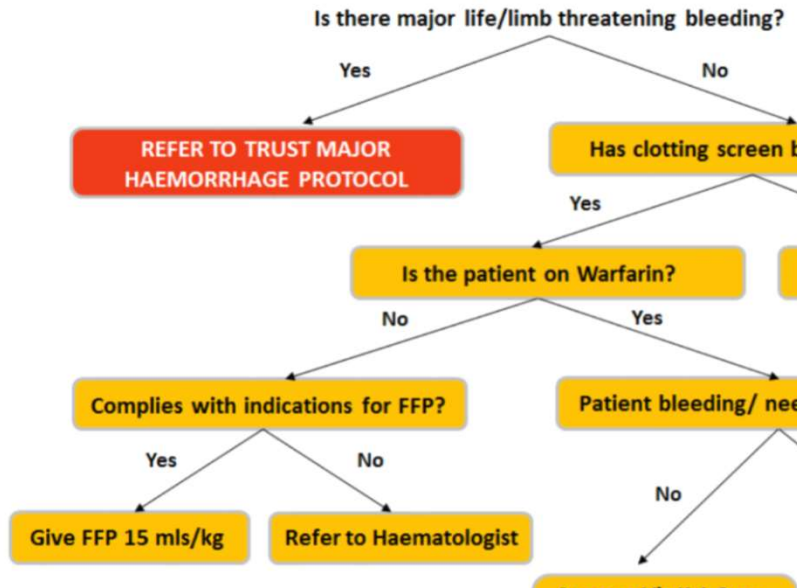




# How do we do this?

- Lab staff should aim to be blood ‘custodians’
  - Collective responsibility, blood stocks, patient safety etc. etc.
- BUT be mindful of urgency and clinical situation and not delay blood provision....
- Review all requests – know the clinical details up front
  - **Active bleeding?** If not:
    - Check for recent results - can ask for blood tests before issue if non-urgent
    - Individual plans for transfusion dependent patients (NICE 24)
    - Single unit transfusions – stable, non-bleeding patients
- Clear guidelines (lab and clinical)
- Support from haematology medical staff, Transfusion Committee, Trust Board backing

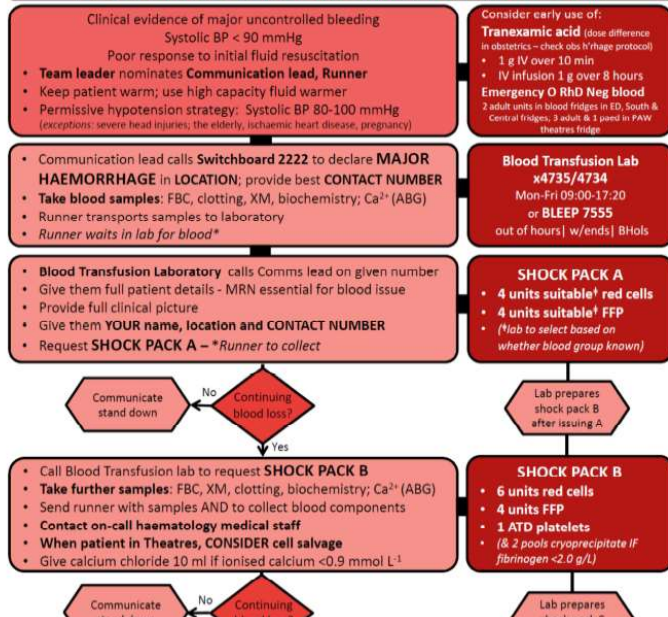
## FFP Algorithm



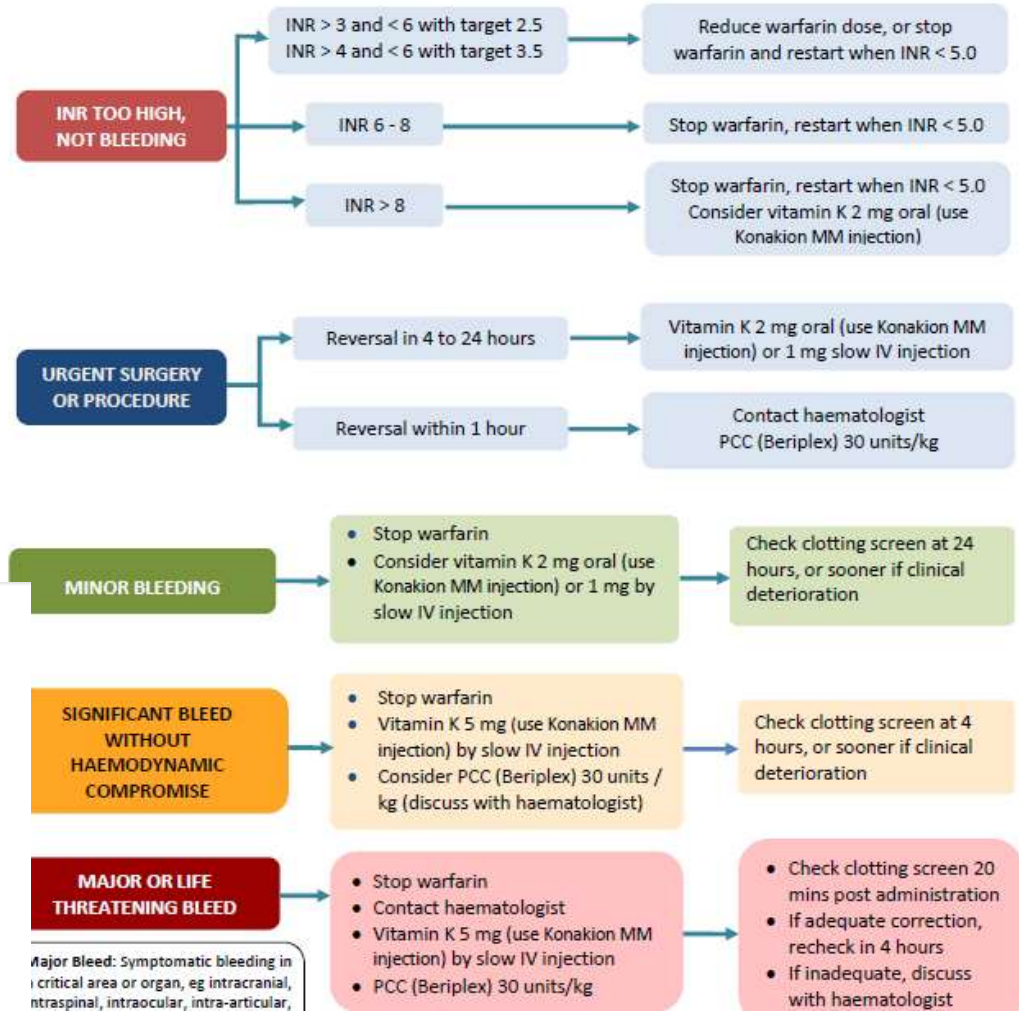
Royal United Hospital Bath **NHS**

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## ADULT MAJOR HAEMORRHAGE PROTOCOL



## MANAGEMENT OF WARFARIN REVERSAL



# Myth 2

‘Doctors know more than  
us about blood  
transfusion’

- Clinical transfusion education in medical school and as FY1/2s
- Pick up practice on wards...good and bad
  - Non-haematology consultants & GPs can be 'out of date'
  - Trainee doctors reluctant to challenge consultant's authority
    - this is where you can help...

- Laboratory staff complete lengthy training and education in blood transfusion science
- Annual competencies, CPD programme, NEQAS
- Knowledge extensive in certain areas *but lacking in clinical relevance*
  - Can offer valuable support and education
  - Can direct to guidelines, haematology advice

## Myth 2

‘Doctors know more than  
us about blood  
transfusion’

**MYTH BUSTED!**

# Collaboration

- Working together is the key
- Stronger as a team with a common goal – best practice for best patient outcome

# Myth 3

‘I don’t have the authority to challenge’



# Facts

- Know your rights and responsibilities
  - **BMS:**
    - HCPC registration – must take responsibility for own actions
  - **Medical staff:**
    - GMC and medical liability insurance - as above, but with extra cover
- Be aware of your place in the clinical pathway – **does the buck stop with you?**

- *Doctors make the difficult decisions and take ultimate responsibility for the patient in their care*
- *You will be held responsible for any avoidable delay in provision which results in patient harm*

# So what does that mean?

## THIS IS IMPORTANT

- You have the authority to *challenge* a request, but...
  - You do NOT have the authority to *refuse* it
- 
- It's important they know you aren't saying 'No', you are just seeking advice / expressing concern
  - So...if you get a request that doesn't 'fit' the guidelines...

# Establish clinical urgency immediately

**Patient has life-threatening bleeding/trauma/arrest?**

YES

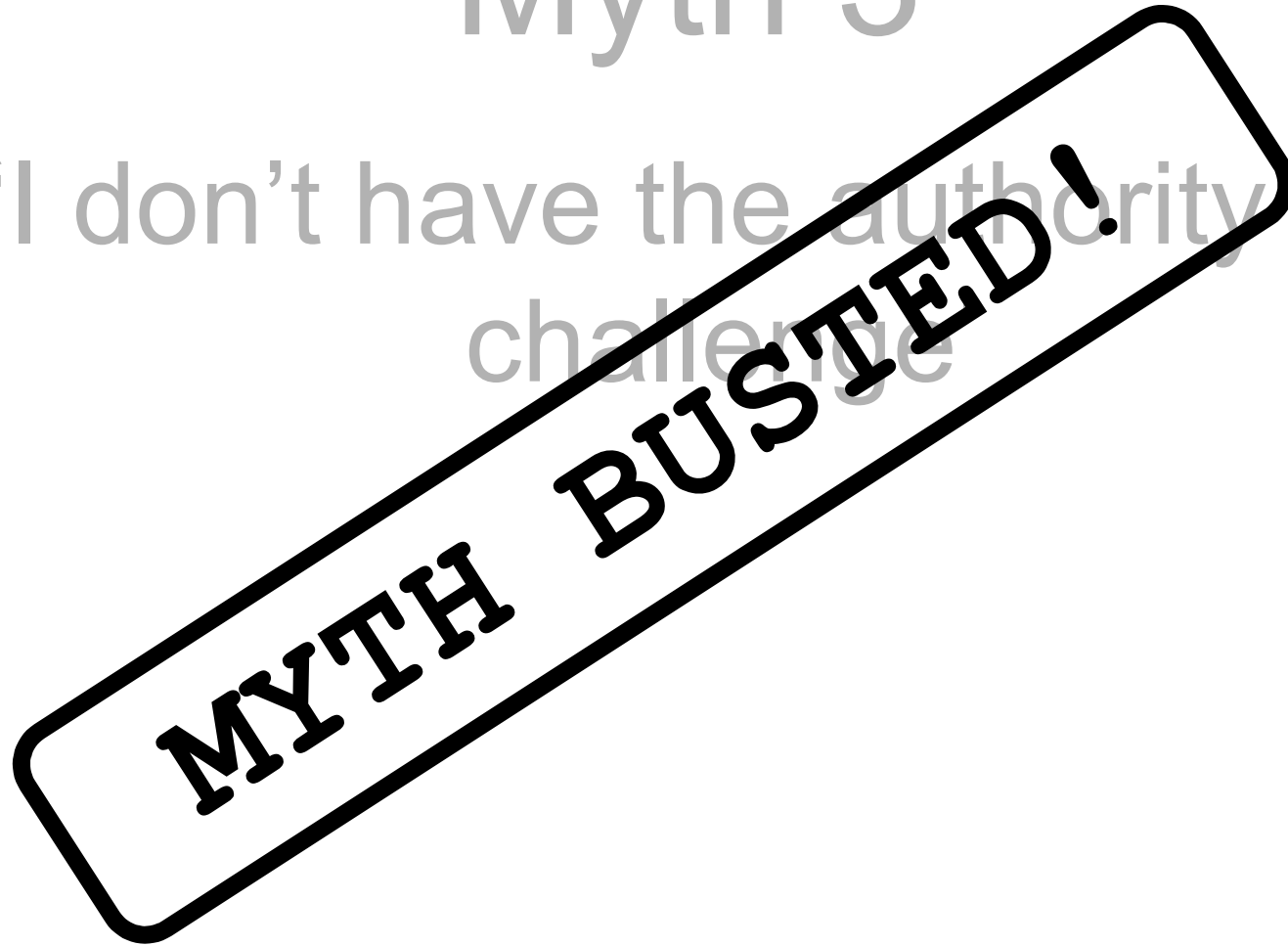
- Start processing request
- *(bleeding - suggest they declare Major Haemorrhage?)*
- Recommend they discuss with haematologist ASAP
- Take name and number and contact on-call haem medic yourself!

NO

- Refer them to relevant Trust guidelines
- Tell them this request must be reviewed by the Transfusion Team and explain how it doesn't meet Trust guidelines
- Ask for their contact details and aim for a prompt response

# Myth 3

'I don't have the authority to challenge'



# SHOT Bites No 8 Massive haemorrhage - delays

SERIOUS HAZARDS OF TRANSFUSION

Email: [shot@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:shot@nhsbt.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 0161 423 4208

Website: [www.shotuk.org](http://www.shotuk.org)

## Background:

- 'Delay in appropriate transfusion contributes to death and morbidity in sick patients and is often caused by poor communication between clinicians and laboratory staff' (Key Message in the 2015 Annual SHOT Report).
- The number of reports of delays causing harm has increased each year (2010-2015).
- There were 94 cases of delays in the 2015 Annual SHOT Report; some patients suffered cardiac arrest. Many delays, 67%, were emergency or urgent requests. There were 6 deaths in which delay contributed and 5 cases of major morbidity, 2 in major obstetric haemorrhages.

## Common Reasons:

**Communication Failure** contributed in 25% of delays reported (SHOT 2015-16):

### Key Messages:

Desire to follow good transfusion practice in some areas, if taken out of context, may risk patient death or morbidity due to delays in transfusion in MH scenarios.

Examples include:

- avoidance of unnecessary use of O D- at all
- giving 2 units of O D- only and no more permitted while a patient's sample is tested for ABO group, or a 2<sup>nd</sup> group check is awaited, or a discrepancy in patient identification means that a repeat sample is needed
- withholding any blood as the antibody screen is positive but antibody identification is not yet known
- avoiding wastage

In all these scenarios, there are safety concerns, but if clinical harm to patients from withholding blood outweighs these, then emergency blood is essential and should be offered (e.g.: O D-, O D+, group specific, or ABO full Rh & K matched, depending on the scenario).

- Treat all MH calls as emergencies until proven otherwise

# To achieve this?

- Guidelines must be pragmatic and comprehensive, well evidenced – NICE, BSH
- Accessible to lab staff & medical staff
- Medical staff must know the lab staff will challenge requests
  - Medical induction/teaching
  - Governance meetings etc.
- Good education for medical staff
  - *Nudge theory...*
- Changes hospital perception of labs
  - Will start asking labs for advice
  - Supportive service
- AfC banding

# What if things get heated?

- Empathise – you do not have the patient in front of you
- It takes two...try not to get sucked in
- Always be polite and calm, constructive and helpful
- This is where robust guidelines help
- Take their name and contact number
- Document *everything*

## PASS IT ON TO A HAEMATOLOGIST

REMEMBER: no-one has the right to be rude or abusive

- there is a **patient** at the end of this – it's not about you
- We're all on the same side – common goal

# Essentials for an empowered blood transfusion lab?

- ✓ Educated, competent, supported and motivated team of BMSs
- ✓ Enthusiastic blood transfusion manager and TT
- ✓ Clear guidelines for use of all components
- ✓ Supportive haematology medical team