



### A Message from the Regional Transfusion Team (RTT):

In 2020, we saw unprecedented challenges in what was to become the start of one of the most difficult times for all colleagues across healthcare. We thank members of the South Central Regional Transfusion Committee (RTC) and the RTT for adapting, for their continuing hard work, and for their resilience. We pay tribute to those we have lost during this pandemic and honour their memory.

We bade farewell to Nigel Sargent in August, as RTC Chair after almost six years, and in November, welcomed Nicholas Goddard, Consultant Anaesthetist at Southampton University Hospital to this role.

### Transfusion Laboratory Manager (TLM) update:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a new set of challenges to the Hospital Transfusion Laboratories. The initial challenges included: Handling rapid changes in requirements for blood components in response to the changes in clinical services within trusts, including how to reduce the wastage of red cells already in stock; New protocols for handling COVID19 positive samples; Staffing issues, which included staff having to shield, staff becoming ill and worries over how to manage a service on minimal staffing if required; How to continue to progress staff training and the move to the virtual platforms, especially for staff needing to self-isolate or shield.

As the year progressed, laboratories had to remain flexible in terms of blood component provision as the clinical services within hospitals moved/closed/reopened etc. A new focus was how to keep our laboratory staff safe as social distancing in small lab spaces is not easy, laboratories found new ways of working to help with this.

The National TLM working group of the NBTC was working hard over this time to support TLMs throughout the region. We produced and published 2 sets of Frequently asked questions which were intended to circulate good practice to other hospitals. We also continue to work with NHSBT to provide insight on blood components requirements in the near future to help with stock planning. The group also produced a paper on the specification for emergency stock which is a best practice guide to help laboratories reduce their demand on O D negative red cells.

Overall, although the year was somewhat challenging, we feel that the TLMs in the region rose to these challenges. It is noted that except for April and May, the wastage of red cell products remained at the level previously seen. *Julie Staves, TLM Oxford University Hospitals, Kerry Dowling, TLM Southampton University Hospital.*

### Transfusion Practitioner (TP) update:

Like all working in healthcare over the past 12 months, TPs have worked hard to support the necessary, sometimes rapid, changes in practice. Meetings and training have been delivered via newly learned technologies; protocols for off-site transfusion have been developed allowing vulnerable patients to avoid acute hospitals; and staff have adjusted to a mixture of home and 'Covid-secure' on-site working. There has long been a focus in transfusion on being prepared for events such as major incidents and blood shortages, but, Covid has forced us to become better prepared for other less expected obstacles that we may face.

The challenge now, as we start to see the light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel, is to decide which of these new practices to permanently adopt, and when others can safely revert to normal, *Jonathon Ricks, TP group Chair, TP Southampton University Hospital.*

The RTT would like to acknowledge and thank TPs and TLMs for the contribution of the group to the development of the 'Lessons Learned – Covid 19', a summary put together by the National TP Network, in conjunction with the National TLM group, for shared learning. The RTT recognise the significant efforts by TLMs Julie Staves and Kerry Dowling, who, on behalf of the NBTC National TLM group, have produced welcome help for Transfusion Laboratories in the form of clarifying 'Frequently Asked Questions' and providing 'Advice on Good Stock Management' post Covid-19, available [here](#).

In this summary, we look back at 2020, at some of what has been achieved. As we move into 2021, we welcome our new RTC Chair and look forward to working alongside our South East Coast colleagues and the opportunities this brings as we merge to a new South East RTC in the Spring.



# Education and Training



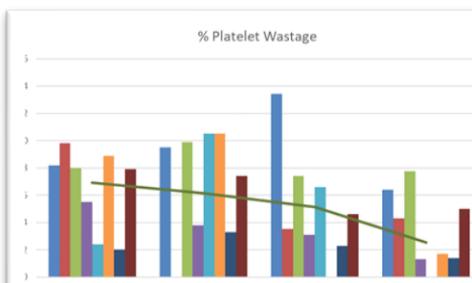
**RTC Education and Business Meeting 'Obstetrics, NICE Mums'** was held on 4 March 2020, Thatcham, the last face to face meeting held prior to lockdown with 50 delegates attending. The meeting addressed adopting NICE Quality Standard QS138 in obstetrics, with a strong focus on the importance of addressing iron deficiency. 97% of survey respondents said the event fully met their objectives, overall score 3.8 /4.

We were pleased to be able to continue to maintain education during 2020, with our first foray into virtual training happening on the 7<sup>th</sup> October with our ever popular **'Transfusion Bites'** session. This was also the first joint event held with our colleagues in the South East Coast RTC, with over 120 delegates attending. The event received very positive feedback, with appreciation shown for delivering an accessible, relevant, and welcome learning opportunity. Talks included pre-hospital transfusion; management of blood stock levels during COVID; a catastrophic bleed at a satellite site; and the importance of clear communication in avoiding transfusion errors in paediatrics. A successful, interactive session, with 100% of survey respondents reporting they would recommend a similar event to colleagues. Presentations, where permission given, can be found on our [JPAC site](#) and the [PBM England YouTube channel](#)



A **Joint TP and TLM meeting** was held on September 8<sup>th</sup> via Microsoft Teams, with 23 attending. The session included talks on the O neg Working Group and a hospital presentation on working safely with COVID-19.

## Regional Audit



### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were carried

out in February and August with submissions from 7 hospitals. KPI's include compliance to elements of NICE Quality Standard QS138; blood component usage and wastage. Improvements included a reduction in % of platelet wastage. It is recognised that it is difficult to draw meaning on blood component KPI trends for 2020, given the sudden cancellation of elective work in March followed by the variable recovery of clinical services over the Summer.

A **'Platelet Stock'** survey was carried out to identify if/how platelets were being held as stock by hospitals in the region. Results from 9 hospitals showed good practice with the majority of hospitals NOT holding A neg platelets, with clear reviews of practice and local improvements evidenced. The only area for review may be specification for apheresis platelets in light of the 2019 SaBTO guidance update.

A regional **'O Positive Policy'** scoping survey identified which hospitals have a policy to use O positive for unknown adult males in an emergency. 9 hospitals responded, with 6 having a policy in place. Those with policies are willing to share if needed. The results were discussed at the joint TP and TLM meeting with agreement that a project as a region will positively impact on the usage and/or wastage of O Negative red cells. This work will be revisited in 2021, looking at use of O Positive blood in bleeding males and the provision of blood to the pre-hospital setting.



Ahead of the RTC meeting, a **'Consent for Transfusion in Maternity'** audit was carried out, with TPs from 7 hospitals reviewing a total of 35 routine cases to look at compliance as stated by NICE QS138. Overall, results showed there was documented evidence that verbal information was given in 43% of cases, and written information was given in 46% of cases audited. A **'Maternal Anaemia Policy'** survey was carried out to identify if hospitals in the region had measures in place. Responses were received from 8 Trusts, with 5 having a policy in place already, 3 of which had current documents they were willing to share.

The national results of the **2018 NCA Audit of the Management of Maternal Anaemia were reviewed**, 5 hospitals in SC region took part. The national report for the audit is available [here](#). The regional results from the **NCA 2018 Audit of the Management of Major Haemorrhage were reviewed**, 9 hospitals in SC audited 43 cases. National report available [here](#).

## Shared Learning

Available on our [JPAC](#) website:

*Terrie Perry and Caroline Lowe, TPs at Milton Keynes Hospital, shared instructions on 'How to produce a narrated PowerPoint' to assist with online teaching.*

*Julie Staves, TLM at Oxford University Hospitals, shared a gap analysis template for the updated BSH irradiation guidelines (2020).*

### NEW South East Regional Transfusion Committee - Next Steps

South Central and South East Coast RTCs will merge to become the new **South East RTC** from April, aligning to NHS England South East region

Plans are currently being put in place to:  
Combine meetings for existing groups: RTT; TP  
Review existing workplans & agree 2021 workplan  
Plan RTC meetings, Education Days

Future meeting and events details to follow in due course.

For information on shared policies, RTC activity, forward any ideas for future regional work or events, email [jacky.nabb@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:jacky.nabb@nhsbt.nhs.uk)

