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April 15, 2020

Re: April 8th, 2020 Green Phase Advisory for Platelets and Plasma Protein Products from the National Emergency Blood Management Committee

Dear Hospital Colleagues,

On behalf of the Ministry, and the members of the Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee, we would like to thank all of the dedicated staff and clinicians across hospitals for following the National Emergency Blood Management Committee's guidance since the first Green Phase Advisory that was issued on March 17th, 2020. Collectively, Ontario blood banks and clinicians have effectively decreased provincial inventory demand by emphasizing the need to follow appropriate transfusion guidelines. As a result of these efforts, and in concert with the tremendous outpouring of support by blood donors, on April 8th, 2020 the National Emergency Blood Management Committee lifted the Green Phase Advisory for red blood cells, frozen plasma and cryoprecipitate (attached). Although current platelet levels are strong; the Green Phase Advisory will continue for platelets as their availability is less certain over the weeks to come. As well, the Green Phase Advisory will continue for plasma protein products.

In addition, the Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee would like to share the following:

Adherence to Transfusion Threshold Guidelines

When the Green Phase Advisory was first issued on March 17th, 2020, many strategies were implemented to prepare for a shortage such as strict adherence to blood product utilization guidelines. We understand that there may have been other mitigating factors that contributed to the deferral or cancellation of surgeries or regularly scheduled transfusions of patients with hemoglobinopathies; such as need for beds, resources, staffing, personal protective equipment or concerns over the risk of iatrogenic spread of COVID-19 infection. Hospitals with stem cell transplant programs may have cancelled or delayed transplants for similar reasons.

The Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee requests it be emphasized that:

- The direction provided in the Green Phase Advisory communications has only been to adhere to blood product utilization guidelines and not to defer or cancel any procedure or condition requiring a transfusion based on the potential risk to blood product supply. Direction to defer or cancel would only be recommended during an Amber or Red Phase Advisory.
- Stem cell transplants should not be delayed or cancelled at the present time on the basis of the current Green Phase Advisory for platelets and plasma protein products.

Transitioning to Fibrinogen Concentrate from Cryoprecipitate

As noted earlier, on April 8th, 2020 the National Emergency Blood Management Committee lifted the Green Phase Advisory for cryoprecipitate (attached). As the whole blood collection process during this time is focused on production of platelets which are at continued risk of being in short supply, rather than cryoprecipitate, the Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee requests it be emphasized that “hospitals (be) encouraged to continue the transition from cryoprecipitate to fibrinogen concentrate for treatment of acquired hypofibrinogenemia” as noted in the current Green Phase Advisory. While there are a small number of Ontario hospitals that are still transitioning to fibrinogen concentrate, the Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee encourages that hospitals using fibrinogen concentrate not revert back to using cryoprecipitate so as not to compromise the platelet supply. For more information on transitioning to Fibrinogen Concentrate, please contact your regional Ontario Regional Blood Coordinating Network representative and see the National Advisory Committee on Blood and Blood Products statement on Fibrinogen Concentrate at <https://www.nacblood.ca/resources/index.html>.

In closing, this communication is meant to inform hospitals on the current advice from the National and Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committees so that they can reassess decisions made for patient populations dependent upon blood products.

This continues to be a dynamic situation with limited ability to predict what will happen in the weeks and months to come. We will continue to update you with the most current direction or advice from the National and Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committees to help support hospitals in making decisions about patient care that is reliant upon the blood supply.

Please visit the Ontario Regional Blood Coordinating Network website (<https://transfusionontario.org/en/>) for COVID-19 information and tools for hospitals for blood management.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Thomas Smith, Team Lead, Drugs Programs Policy and Strategy at Thomas.Smith@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angie', enclosed in a light gray rectangular box.

Angie Wong
Director, Drug Programs Policy and Strategy

Attachment

c: Patrick Dicerni, Assistant Deputy Minister, Drugs and Devices Division, Ministry of Health
Ontario Emergency Blood Management Committee Members