INFORMATION ONLY

Packed Red Blood Cell Units from donors with Red Blood Cell Antibodies

Customer Letter # 2010-17

2010-05-31

Dear Customer,

Executive Summary:
Canadian Blood Services will standardize issuing packed red blood cell units containing red blood cell antibodies beginning 2010-06-14.

Background:
Canadian Blood Services currently issues packed red blood cells from donors with red cell antibodies to some hospitals; however the process differs between regions.

New standardized practice:
In an effort to standardize our process across the country, all Canadian Blood Services regions will routinely issue packed red blood cells from donors with red cell antibodies to all customer hospitals beginning 2010-06-14.

How will you know which units contain antibody?
Each unit will be labeled (on the lower left quadrant of the label) to indicate the presence of antibodies in the donor plasma. In donors with common antibodies, the specific antibody, such as “Anti-D”, will be specified on the label. In very uncommon cases where the antibody is against a rare antigen, “Other-AB” will be printed on the label. Finally, in cases where the antibody specificity could not be identified, “UNID-AB” will be printed on the label.

The antibody information on the label is not barcoded. You can enter it manually into your hospital Laboratory information system if you wish. An example of a label for a unit with an anti-D antibody accompanies this letter. These units represent less than 0.5% of units shipped to hospitals.

Rationale:
Each packed red blood cell unit contains a negligible (less than 15 mL) volume of plasma in a total volume of 250-300 mL, allowing for the safe transfusion of packed red blood cells from donors with red cell antibodies to patients with the corresponding red cell antigen. For example, packed red blood cells from a group O donor, containing anti-A, may be safely transfused into a group A recipient. This has been a common practice for many years. In a similar fashion, packed red blood cells from a donor containing anti-Kell antibody may be safely transfused to a Kell positive patient.

What remains unchanged?:
Plasma and Platelets from donors with red cell antibodies will not be issued for transfusion.
Example of Red Blood Cell product label for a unit containing Antibody:

Additional Information:
This Customer Letter and the enclosures can also be viewed at www.blood.ca in the “hospitals” section.
If you have questions about this Customer Letter, please contact your local Canadian Blood Services Hospital Liaison Specialist or Medical Director.

Sincerely,

Dana V. Devine, PhD
Vice-President, Medical, Scientific and Research Affairs