Dear Colleagues:

During the summer and fall of 2018, Canadian Blood Services, in collaboration with Héma-Québec and the American Red Cross, is embarking on a Babesia prevalence study on a representative sample of our blood donors from across Canada. Babesiosis is caused by a protozoan parasite, *Babesia microti*, (*Babesia duncanii* in the western provinces), transmitted by infected ticks and prevalent in the northeastern and midwestern U.S. Babesia infections are relatively mild in healthy individuals but may cause more serious illness in immunocompromised patients. In the U.S, more than 150 cases of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis have been reported.

There are few data on the prevalence of Babesiosis in Canada, other than a study done by Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec in 2013, which found zero positive/14,000 blood donors.

Product recalls and lookback investigations will be conducted on donors who are Babesia NAT and/or antibody positive. We expect to identify very few donors with a positive Babesia test, but in each case, Canadian Blood Services will contact hospitals who received affected units, regarding product recall and lookbacks.

You will receive the usual Component Retrieval Record, indicating a Babesia positive donor from the study. The Lookback request will also provide information on the study and how the blood recipient’s physician can arrange testing for the relevant marker. Provincial Public Health Laboratories in each province either can perform the testing, or the sample may be forwarded to another appropriate laboratory.

If you have any further questions regarding the Babesiosis Study please contact:
Dr. Margaret Fearon, Medical Director, Medical Microbiology 416-313-4561 or
Dr. Mark Bigham, Medical Officer, BC and Yukon 604-707-3505

Please share a copy of this customer letter with relevant physicians at your hospital who might be interested in this information.

This customer letter can also be viewed at www.blood.ca in the “Hospitals” section. If you have questions about this letter, or if you require it in an accessible format, please contact your local hospital liaison specialist.

Sincerely,

Isra Levy, MD
Vice President, Medical Affairs and Innovation