Platelets: Working together to manage a precious resource

From April 2014 to March 2015, Canadian Blood Services collected, manufactured and distributed over 113,000 doses of platelets (apheresis and pooled) to hospitals. Platelets are one of the more challenging blood components to manage in part due to its relatively short shelf-life of five days.

The amount of platelet units discarded within the blood system in Canada (excluding Quebec) is higher than many other international blood systems. This means millions of dollars of platelet units are thrown away and not transfused to patients. Management of platelet inventory is a complicated topic, but working together within the blood system, we may be able to identify ways to decrease the number of platelet units that go to waste.

Last fall, as part of our ongoing efforts to understand utilization and share best practices, our hospital liaison specialists conducted a survey of 53 hospitals to uncover best practices around management of platelet inventory.

The goal of this survey was to identify ways to decrease the number of platelet units that are discarded. Hospital responses were candid and provided valuable insight into hospital practices as well as ideas and recommendations on how Canadian Blood Services and hospitals can better work together to optimize the provision of platelets for patients.

All hospitals served by Canadian Blood Services received a customer letter outlining a number of platelet utilization and inventory management best practices used successfully by hospitals across the country.

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