

COVID-19 pandemic preparedness of blood center

Sir,

Blood transfusion is an essential service to mankind in various situations.^[1] The COVID-19 is the biggest pandemic of 21st century.^[2] Hence, maintaining safe and adequate blood supply during COVID-19 pandemic is a big challenge for blood center.

Ours is a type of preparatory program for COVID-19 pandemic in a blood center of a tertiary care hospital in North India.

Various challenges are faced by blood transfusion services due to COVID-19 pandemic are:

- Donor challenges: Difficult for donors to reach blood center in lockdown situations. Hence, donor e-card was provided. Donors had fear of exposure to COVID-19 at hospital blood center so donors were screened for temperature at entry point of blood center, sanitize their hands, additional donor questionnaire indicating that he was not exposed to flu, in close contact with any COVID patient or any travelling history in the last 14 days^[3]
 - Inventory management challenge: Decrease in demand of blood and increase in wastage due to OPD shut down and decrease admission in hospital, so daily check of balance for rational collection of blood was done and we followed first in first out policy, start transfusing nonidentical but compatible blood units to the patient (over the group as allowed by guidelines)^[4] and transfer excess blood/component to nearby blood center where needed
 - Staff challenge: To keep the staff safe from infection, we started COVID-19 laboratory with separate centrifuge and protective equipment kits for staff were prepared and standard operating procedure for receiving and handling COVID sample was prepared, regular cleaning, and sterilization of blood center area and staff rotational duty roster to decrease exposure
 - Consumable challenge: Decrease supply of consumable due to lockdown situation so shift to manual testing and transfer excess consumable near expiry to the nearest blood center where as needed and vice versa
- Donor notification challenge: Difficult for donors to reach blood center for counseling and referral. Hence, we notified and counsel them telephonically and advise them to repeat test at local diagnostic center. If positive, then report to our center so that they can be referred to the respective departments for further treatment.

Conclusion

This preparedness will help donors to reach blood center for donation, blood center to remain functional during pandemic, smooth functioning of hospital, technical staff will prevent the spread of infection with safe practices, to provide blood/component where ever needed even for COVID patients and prevent wastage of blood/component and consumables. This preparatory program can be adopted by central authorities to deal with future pandemics.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Letter to the Editor

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