

Redefined role of eye bank counselors during COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Editor,

COVID-19 pandemic has rampaged unabated, eluding all therapeutic options. Given the lack of effective treatment or vaccines, convalescent plasma (CP) has emerged as a viable intervention.^[1,2]

Lok Nayak hospital (LNH), New Delhi, a 2000 bedded hospital became a dedicated COVID-19 facility on March 18, 2020, and on July 14, 2020 plasma bank was established to cater exclusively to

the hospital inpatients. With fewer donors coming forward, need was felt for a dedicated counseling for CP donation.^[3]

The Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme being rendered temporarily nonfunctional, the three eye bank counselors were deployed in plasma bank. COVID-19 recovered patients discharged from the LNH were contacted and counseled telephonically as per Government of India guidelines.^[4]

To evaluate the impact of this arrangement on the number of plasma donations, a retrospective analysis of hospital records from March 18, 2020 to August 31, 2020 in LNH was undertaken [Fig. 1].

Counseling, irrespective of the educational status, resulted in 82.60% of CP donations (57 following counseling + 12 self-motivated) at LNH without any monetary incentive. The success rates for eye donation following counseling as per an Indian study ranges between 30 and 40%.^[5] For plasma donation, the success rate of 32% was achieved following counselling (91 + 58 cases of the 460 eligible donors counseled). Lower figures could be attributed to the newer arena for eye bank counselors and an early evaluation. Continuation of their services is likely to improve the results.

Individualized counseling allays the fear of reinfection/ weakness and conveys the altruism associated with CP donation. Empathetic behavior of hospital staff and counseling of potential donors at the time of discharge can increase these numbers.

To conclude, a need-based, judicious repurposing of counsellors from eye bank to plasma bank resulted in saving many lives at our setup and can be used as a model in other hospital settings.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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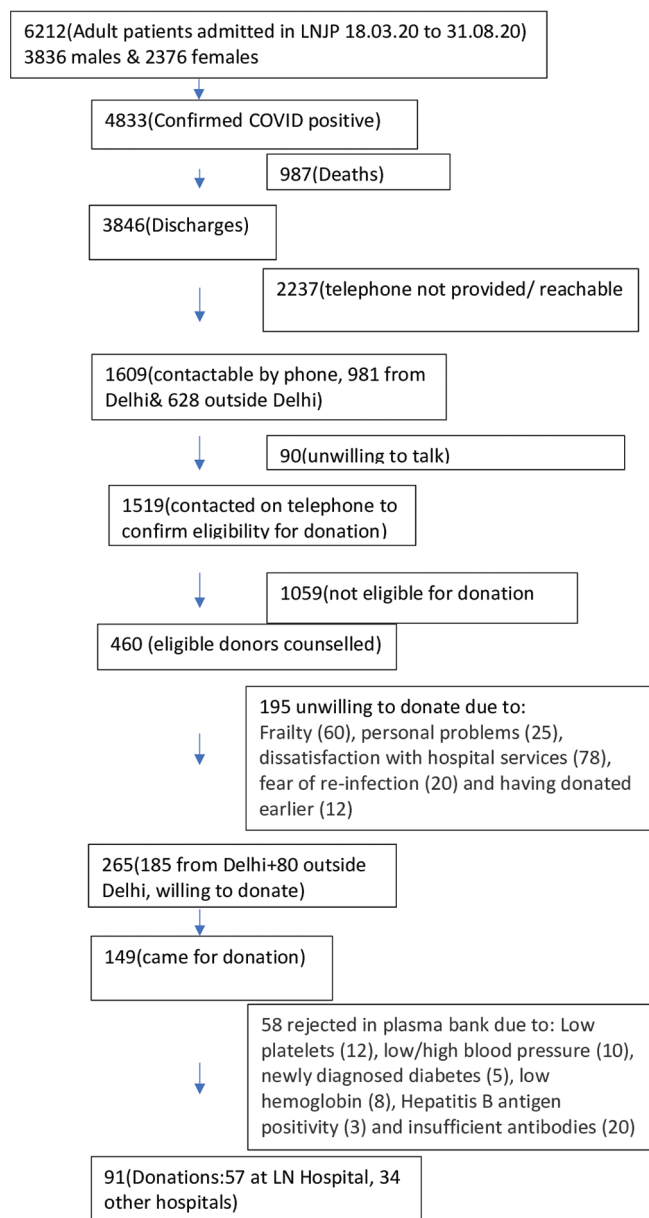


Figure 1: Flow chart illustrating methodology used for identification of potential plasma donors to actual donations

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