

iTRANSFUSEFACTSHEET

all about blood

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I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HAEMOVIGILANCE AND PATIENT SAFETY

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What is haemovigilance?

Haemovigilance is the collection, analysis and sharing of information on unexpected or undesirable effects of blood transfusion. Haemovigilance is also increasingly associated with the best use of blood and improved patient care.

Why do we need haemovigilance?

Transfusion is a key part of modern healthcare but it's not without risks. Despite significant improvements in product safety through careful donor selection and infectious disease testing, errors and transfusion reactions still occur. These adverse events can lead to poor clinical outcomes for patients, longer hospital stays and in severe cases, death.

Who looks after haemovigilance?

Haemovigilance in Australia is overseen by the National Blood Authority (NBA) with the individual states and territories responsible for collecting transfusion-related adverse event data. The Blood Service monitors both donor and patient adverse events. The NBA collates data into a national report.

Does haemovigilance just focus on transfusion reactions?

No. Of particular interest are situations where something unplanned occurred but did not result in harm to the patient. Learning about these 'near misses' is extremely valuable. Understanding what went wrong teaches us how to improve practice and procedure.

Who is responsible for haemovigilance?

Haemovigilance should be an integral part of the organisation's quality system. All staff are encouraged to report adverse events and near misses that may affect blood product quality and other safety concerns related



to transfusion. Ensuring the involvement of relevant stakeholders such as the Blood Service, hospital clinical staff and transfusion laboratory, hospital transfusion committee, regulator and state health department is also important.

What have we learned from haemovigilance?

It is hard to know for sure, but at least 1.5% of transfusion recipients experience a transfusion-related event ranging from mild discomfort to potentially life-threatening events such as an ABO-incompatible transfusion or transfusion-related acute lung injury (TRALI).

It has been reported that around 65% of transfusion-related adverse events in Australia involved avoidable procedural errors occurring at some point in the transfusion process.

Does haemovigilance make blood transfusion safer?

International experience shows haemovigilance can raise awareness and understanding of transfusion-related adverse

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The word 'haemovigilance' was coined by the French and is a hybrid of the Greek *haema* meaning blood and the Latin *vigilans* meaning watchful.

events. Haemovigilance reporting can also help build better transfusion processes and drive initiatives which enhance transfusion safety, deliver improved patient outcomes and conserve valuable resources.

The information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to be medical or professional advice. The disclaimer found at transfusion.com.au applies to this fact sheet.

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