18 March 2020

The WCBS assures blood donors that donating blood is safe

Dear Donor Representative,

The Western Cape Blood Service (WCBS) would like to assure donors that donating blood is safe.

There is currently no reason to suspect that COVID-19 can be transmitted through blood transfusion. This is based on the fact that respiratory viruses, in general, are not known to be transmitted by blood transfusion, and there have been no reported cases of transfusion-transmitted coronavirus.

The WCBS is heavily dependent on Blood Donor Representatives and hosting venues, to enable us to convene blood donation collection clinics. The crisis we all currently face is unprecedented and we urge Donor Representatives and hosting venues to please assist us to collect as much blood as possible for the foreseeable future so that we can maintain a sufficient blood supply for the Western Cape over this critical period.

Routine blood donor health assessment measures that are already in place will prevent individuals with clinical respiratory infections from donating blood. For example, blood donors must be in good health on the day of donation, and be negative for any risk factors surveyed by the blood donor questionnaire.

The WCBS would also like to reassure blood donors that as part of our daily protocols, clinic staff maintain a high level of hand hygiene. Staff sanitise their hands regularly by washing their hands with soap and water in addition to using hand sanitiser before and after each encounter with a donor. Hand sanitiser and wet wipes will also be readily available for donors to use at each clinic. We are aware of the requirement to limit the size of gatherings and have a plan in place to ensure we are able to manage blood donor drives within practical limits, at little or no inconvenience to blood donors.

The WCBS is currently experiencing a critical shortage of O and B blood groups. The WCBS would like to urge all healthy blood donors who belong to all blood groups to continue to donate blood to ensure that the blood stock levels are adequate during these challenging times. “We anticipate added pressure on the blood supply during Easter, Ramadaan and the winter months and the added effects of the Coronavirus could see the number of eligible donors decrease in the following few months”, says Michelle Vermeulen, Promotions, PR and Planning Manager for the WCBS.
The key messages are:
- It is safe, and in fact essential, for healthy blood donors to continue to donate blood.
- WCBS has comprehensive measures in place to ensure that our blood donation clinics do not pose any risks to the blood donor community, and the broader public.
- WCBS desperately requires the assistance of all Blood Donor Representatives and blood drive hosting entities to ensure that we are able to continue to collect blood.

Should you require any additional information, please contact the following personnel at WCBS:
- Michelle Vermeulen - PR and Marketing Manager - 083 411 4583
- Links Archery - Donor collections Manager - 084 625 6482
- Greg Bellairs - CEO / Medical Director - 083 259 2119

I would like to thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Gregory Bellairs
CEO / MEDICAL DIRECTOR
WESTERN CAPE BLOOD SERVICE