



Date: April 15, 2016

TO: OB/GYN Physicians
Hospital CEOs, Chiefs of Medical Staff, Laboratory Medical Directors, Blood Bank Medical Directors, and Blood Bank Technologists

RE: ZIKA Virus (ZIKV) and Transfusion Safety

The recognition of potential transmission of ZIKV through blood transfusion is a concern for multiple organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO), US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Department (PHD), and national blood banking organizations.

Your blood center wants to assure you we are doing everything possible to stay ahead of this potential summer crisis. LifeSouth is taking all available measures to mitigate this transfusion risk should a locally transmitted infection occur in the Southeastern U.S., especially as the mosquito population thrives in the upcoming months.

Currently, there are no reported cases of locally spread (autochthonous) cases of ZIKV. However, there are about 100 known cases of ZIKV infection in Florida, Georgia and Alabama which were acquired in other countries and brought back to the U.S. through travel. We currently defer all potential blood donors who provide a history of travel to countries or areas with active transmission of ZIKV and/or who have or had signs or symptoms of ZIKV. Additionally, we defer any donor who has had sexual contact with a male who has traveled to an area with active ZIKV infection.

Within the next three months, testing for ZIKV is expected to be available for impacted areas in the U.S. As of April 2016, Puerto Rico's blood collections are now tested for ZIKV.

LifeSouth invested in the use of pathogen reduction technology to mitigate infectious transmission in platelets and plasma products. We are working quickly to have this technology available this summer. This technology is unavailable for red cell components.

Whenever a new disease surfaces there is, of course, added concern for any immunosuppressed patient. However, in the case of ZIKV, women of reproductive potential are also considered at high risk. Although unknown, the CDC implies that the period of greatest risk for ZIKV-related fetal complications is 8 weeks prior to conception through at least the end of the second trimester.*

*Source: CDC MMWR *Weekly* / April 1, 2016 / 65(12);315–322 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6512e2.htm>

Keeping you informed if/when the ZIKV spreads through the U.S. is our foremost objective. If you must transfuse an immunosuppressed or pregnant patient during a time when ZIKV becomes endemic, please call us. We may be able to help.

If you have questions or comments, please call a LifeSouth physician at 1-888-795-2707.

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Recommendations concerning ZIKV and the Safety of the Blood Supply

Because of the potential risk of transfusion transmitted ZIKV, LifeSouth encourages physicians who care for women of reproductive potential to follow current restrictive transfusion guidelines and transfuse blood and blood products only when necessary.

Of greatest concern is the transfusion of a blood product containing ZIKV to a pregnant female, whose fetus would potentially be at risk of developing microcephaly and other neurologic disorders. Although unknown, the CDC has implied the period of greatest risk of ZIKV related fetal complications to be 8 weeks prior to conception through the beginning of the third trimester, if not beyond.*

*Source: CDC MMWR *Weekly* / April 1, 2016 / 65(12);315–322 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6512e2.htm>

This information is being communicated to you because:

- ZIKA Virus (Like Dengue Fever, and Chikungunya virus) are assumed to be transfusion transmitted.
- 80% of infected, and potentially infectious individuals are without signs or symptoms.
- A blood donor screening test for ZIKV is currently not available.
 - A test is in use for Puerto Rico's blood collections and is expected to be available for general screening of the rest of the U.S. blood supply in the coming months.
- We currently defer all potential blood donors who provide a history of travel to areas with active transmission of ZIKV or who have had sexual contact with a male who has traveled to an affected area, or has had signs or symptoms of ZIKV.
- LifeSouth is currently investigating the use of pathogen reduction technology to mitigate infectious transmission in selected blood products.
 - This technology only exists for platelets and plasma, but is not currently available for RBC products.
 - We expect to have limited access to pathogen reduced platelets and plasma products available by summer.
- As of this date, there are no reported cases of locally spread (autochthonous) cases of ZIKA Virus.
 - Although there are about 100 known cases of ZIKV infection identified in the states served by LifeSouth, all of these cases were acquired through travel or sexual contact.
- It is a strong probability that locally transmitted infection will soon occur in the Southeastern United States as the mosquito population thrives in the upcoming months.
- Once there are locally transmitted cases, and depending on the availability of a blood donor screening test, LifeSouth will either continue with local collections or import blood products from its unaffected areas.

If you have questions or comments about this communication, or if you find yourself in a situation where you must transfuse an immunosuppressed or pregnant patient during a time when ZIKV becomes endemic, please call a LifeSouth Community Blood Center physician at 1-888-795-2707. We may be able to help.

We will periodically send updated information to hospitals in the coming months. Thank you.

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