

March 13, 2020

Re: COVID-19 and the Blood Supply

The blood supply is facing an unprecedented challenge due to the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. Large numbers of blood drives are being cancelled daily and donors are increasingly practicing voluntary social distancing. LifeSouth has been putting forth a concerted effort alongside the FDA, AABB, the American Red Cross and America's Blood Centers to educate donors regarding the urgent need for blood donation, and the safety of both donating and receiving blood products. Despite this, we are likely to see critical shortages of blood products occur in the near term if the trajectory does not change. LifeSouth needs the help of our healthcare partners as we work through this challenging time.

First, we ask that you educate your staff and visitors about the importance of blood donation, maintain existing blood drives, and schedule new drives wherever possible. Current drives can be found at www.lifesouth.org, or by calling 1-888-795-2707. You may schedule a drive by getting in touch with your local LifeSouth staff, or sending an e-mail to scheduling@lifesouth.org. LifeSouth would also like to release joint press releases to reach donors in your community encouraging blood donation. If you are willing, please contact our Director of Communications, Brite Whitaker, at bbwhitaker@lifesouth.org.

Second, please consider the blood supply in your disaster plan for COVID-19 and include the blood center in planning where possible. While shortages are not severe today, the U.S. is on the precipice of a national public health crisis due to a critical blood shortage of all blood types if appropriate action is not taken. The more blood we conserve today, the more we will have available should the situation continue to worsen. Actions you should consider include:

- 1) Rescheduling elective surgeries and procedures that require blood products
- 2) Increasing use of perioperative blood salvage techniques and bloodless surgery
- 3) Proactively examining your transfusion thresholds for appropriateness
- 4) Restricting O-negative RBC use to the following groups:
 - a. Rh-negative patients
 - b. Females of childbearing potential when type-specific products are unavailable, or blood is required prior to pre-transfusion testing being completed and the blood type is unknown

More information available is here:

<https://www.aabb.org/programs/publications/bulletins/Documents/ab19-02.pdf>

LifeSouth will continue our tireless efforts to maintain the safety and adequacy of the blood supply. We are partners in saving lives and look forward to working together to meet the needs of our patients and communities. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me directly at 352-224-1644, or cmlough@lifesouth.org.

Sincerely,

Chris Lough, M.D.

V.P. of Medical Services

LifeSouth Community Blood Centers, Inc.

