



Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan Ministry of Health

BLOOD TRANSFUSION POLICY

Blood transfusion is an important aspect of the Ministry of Health's projects for rehabilitating the Afghan health system. The provision of blood products* of unimpeachable quality and in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of patients' treatment is a Ministry of Health priority.

Achieving this objective calls for the implementation of a national blood transfusion policy intended to rehabilitate the entire sector. Given the current situation in the country, blood transfusion policy in Afghanistan prioritizes 4 tasks:

- Promoting the development of transfusion to meet the needs of public health priorities
- Boosting transfusion safety
- Staff training
- Setting up a national network of transfusion services

1. Promoting the development of transfusion to meet the needs of public health priorities:

Blood transfusion is an essential part of developing a high-quality health-care policy.

Blood transfusion is linked to improving the provision of emergency obstetric care, an integral part of the primary health-care (PHC) strategy that has been adopted by the MoH in order to reduce Afghanistan's very high maternal mortality rate (1600/100000).

Blood transfusion is also essential for surgical emergencies in life-threatening cases, and for instituting a strategy for dealing with blood transmissible diseases (e.g. HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis).

Finally, blood transfusion is useful for the treatment of many hematological diseases (oncological diseases in particular), although for the time being this is not a top public health priority in Afghanistan.

The MoH of Afghanistan emphasis on the importance of developing an efficient system for collecting, preparing, assessing and supplying blood products to the main health-care centers in all over the country.

* Whole blood, reds cells concentrate and fresh frozen plasma.

The resumption of the collection of blood is a priority objective if sufficient quantities of high-quality products are to be available and patients' needs are to be catered for.

The first and indispensable step is to re-invigorate blood donation amongst the general public by renovating blood donation centers and developing mobile donation units. In this regard, the MoH emphasis on the importance of using volunteer blood donors, as the main source for blood supply.

The MoH will make sure that these tasks are carried out properly, as well as organizing campaigns to inform the general public about the importance of blood donation as part of a citizen's duty to the community in Afghanistan.

2. Boosting transfusion safety:

The safety of transfusions is one of the most important aspects of the blood transfusion policy adopted by the MoH. Blood transfusion safety involves every step in the transfusion chain. The *quality of the selection of voluntary blood donors*, the application of the *rules of hygiene* and asepsis, the *performance of tests* for compatibility and for screening for diseases transmissible via the blood, and the *quality of the supply* system for blood products are the main pillars of this safety.

The safety of blood transfusion also calls for the establishment of a system of traceability that makes it possible to identify the link between the donor, the bag donated and the recipient, throughout the transfusion chain.

2.1. Good transfusion practice standards:

The MoH has decided to introduce good transfusion practice standards for all the steps in the transfusion chain. The Afghan blood transfusion system must be able to supply blood products that meet the *quality* and *safety* criteria stipulated by the Good Transfusion Practice Standards compiled by the MoH (to be attached later to this policy statement).

The Good Transfusion Practice Standards specify the rules governing the collection, preparation, assessment and supply of blood products. They describe the actions to be performed during each of the steps in the transfusion chain, and establish the quality and safety criteria with which the products prepared must comply. These constitute the reference document for blood transfusions and situate blood transfusion in the context of setting up inspection and evaluation procedures.

The MoH will monitor dissemination of and compliance with Good Transfusion Practice Standards.

2.2. Consumables:

The availability of sufficient quantities of consumables that comply with Good Practice Standards is one of the conditions for transfusion safety. A list of the nature and types of consumables (sampling kits, reagents, etc.) will be appended to the Good Transfusion Practice Standards.

2.3. Organizing a transfusion center:

A model for the organization of a circuit for blood products from their collection to their distribution is one of the necessary conditions for transfusion safety. It is described in an Appendix to the Good Transfusion Practice Standards.

3. Staff training and the recruitment of competent staff:

Qualified staff are indispensable for the development of blood transfusion and ensuring that the system works properly. Training is required for staff in order to meet the standards of qualified staff, for the blood transfusion services.

This training will be provided on the basis of Good Transfusion Practice Standards. It is intended to provide all the existing staff with the qualifications they require for carrying out their transfusion duties, and developing the skills required for the regular assessment and updating of the skills of the staff.

The training of the prescribing physicians is also essential, so that blood transfusion becomes a high-quality treatment available to meet the patient's needs.

In cooperation with medical schools and other partners conducting training activities, the MoH monitors the training of transfusion services staff and the initial and in-service training of the prescribing physicians.

4. Setting up a national network of transfusion services:

The organization of the Afghan Blood Transfusion System (ABTS) is based on a network of blood transfusion centers in the 32 provinces of the country. The work of collecting and supplying blood products must remain as close as possible to the donors and the hospitals, where they will be consumed, in order to promote the development of blood collection and the supply of high-quality blood products. This proximity is particularly important in the case of health-care facilities involved in obstetric care.

Each "regional" blood transfusion center is technically responsible for the entire transfusion chain throughout its geographical area. It is responsible for the enforcement of Good Transfusion Practice Standards, and for the quality of the products prepared.

5. Implementation of the Blood Transfusion Policy:

Implementation of the blood transfusion policy is based on a specific structure organized around the Ministry of Health, which exercises administrative and political oversight over the entire system. This structure, detailed in a strategic plan for blood transfusion in Afghanistan, which is made of:

- The Ministry of Health itself
- A National Scientific Council for Blood Transfusion
- Five regional transfusions' centers (the existing Central Blood Bank "CBB" in Kabul, and four other centers to be created in Jalal-Abad, Mazar-e-Shareef, Herat and Kandahar).