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How the NEBMC collaborated with stakeholders to mitigate blood shortages during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a test of Canada's blood shortages planning framework. The impacts of the pandemic on blood supply and the planning that followed are described in a [recent article published in Transfusion](#).

Canadian Blood Services experienced unanticipated, reduced blood donor collections because of the pandemic. However, after the National Emergency Blood Management Committee (NEBMC) — which meets regularly to review the supply of blood components and products during the pandemic and make inventory advisories — declared a “Green Phase Advisory”, our hospital customers “responded admirably by aggressively promoting restrictive transfusion practices and use of transfusion alternatives to mitigate negative impacts,” says Dr. Tanya Petraszko, one of the article's authors and Canadian Blood Services director for medical laboratory and stem cell services.

The article highlights some of the steps that were taken by the NEBMC and stakeholders to mitigate blood shortages. One of those steps leveraged available posters from [Choosing Wisely Canada](#) to educate and promote restrictive red blood cell (RBC) transfusion policies. Clinicians and hospital administrators also used presentations to spread the word on the risk of blood shortages. In the end, the drop in blood donor collections was offset by a significantly greater reduction in demand than had been expected. Consequently, blood supply remained sufficient to meet demand.

Thanks to the sustained communication and collaboration of the NEBMC with jurisdictional partners and national patient care organizations, we succeeded in mitigating a shortage.

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