

BloodNotes

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Stem cells without borders

When lockdown measures began rolling out across Canada at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, some stem cell patients were in the middle of a process called conditioning, which typically includes intense chemotherapy and radiation to destroy their bone marrow prior to receiving a transplant. At that point, the patient is at risk of dying if the new stem cells are delayed.

Faced suddenly with modified travel requirements, tighter border rules and fewer flights, the team at [Canadian Blood Services Stem Cell Registry](#) realized that connecting stem cell donors to waiting patients during a pandemic would require extra-heroic feats of logistics.

Gail Morris, manager of donor services for the registry, shifted into overdrive and began assembling a cross-department network of colleagues whose responsibilities affected the transport of stem cells. The team reached out to relevant contacts in the federal government to ensure that international border closures would not restrict stem cell couriers' ability to make their deliveries. After some logistics were ironed out, federal health officials acted quickly to permit pending courier deliveries to Canada.

The next step was to move beyond ad hoc arrangements and secure a permanent exemption from federal travel restrictions. The Canadian Blood Services team — in partnership with Héma-Québec, the operator of Quebec's stem cell registry — worked with the federal government to clear a path for all stem cell couriers coming to Canada and permit them to depart again without quarantining in this country.

Read the incredible story of how our employees, donors and stem cell couriers stepped up to help deliver lifesaving stem cells to patients during the pandemic at blood.ca/stories.

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Fall 2021