

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE SUBGROUP ON PARASITES

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As part of the Annual Meeting of the ISBT Working Party on Transfusion Transmitted Infectious Diseases, the Subgroup on Parasites met in Lisbon on 19 June 2011. The Subgroup on Parasites is focused on investigating the impact of a variety of parasitic agents, ranging from protozoan pathogens to nematodes, which may be transmitted to blood recipients through transfusion. Risks for contracting a parasitic infection by blood transfusion vary regionally, affecting developed and developing countries in similar, yet different ways. A primary task of the Subgroup is to understand the extent to which parasites pose transfusion risks to the ISBT membership and to investigate appropriate interventions through collaborative research efforts.

During the 2011 Annual Meeting, the Subgroup discussed their current project - the implementation of a survey to assess the impact of parasitic agents on transfusion practices in ISBT member countries and their approaches to preventing transmission of these agents. At present the survey focuses on the following agents/diseases: *Plasmodium* spp./malaria, *Trypanosoma cruzi*/Chagas' disease, *Leishmania* spp./leishmaniasis and *Babesia* spp./babesiosis, but other parasitic agents can be considered. The questionnaire is designed to assess how frequently these agents are transmitted by transfusion, the epidemiology of the agent, existing policies to mitigate risk, testing methods and the public health perceptions of each agent in representative countries or blood collection organizations. During the past year the Subgroup has struggled with distribution of the survey, in large part because parasitic agents often affect developed and developing countries, the latter where they are often endemic. With the kind help of Henk Reesink, it was determined to move forward with the survey as an International Forum in *Vox Sanguinis*. Henk suggested that the Chair serve as the guest editor and include other members of the Subgroup as appropriate. Henk and staff provided a preliminary distribution list, but given the need to include respondents from the developing world, Silvano Wendel, JP Allain and others have provided contact information for appropriate persons in Latin America, Africa and other locations. It is anticipated that the survey will be distributed by the end of July. The Subgroup also discussed future projects and application for ISBT funding.

The Annual Meeting of the Subgroup on Parasites closed with a brief scientific section or TTPD (Transfusion Transmitted Parasitic Disease) Roundtable. The first presentation was given by JP Allain and discussed the challenges of preventing transfusion transmitted malaria in endemic areas of Africa among semi-immune recipients. Mike Busch (et al.) followed with a summary of ongoing REDS-II Chagas studies in Brazil examining testing results in long term chagasic patients. Finally, David Leiby and Susan Stramer provided an update on the latest progress towards implementing an intervention in the U.S. to prevent transfusion-transmitted *Babesia*.

