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# The Role of the Transfusion Practitioner in Haemovigilance

Haemovigilance is now an established part of the safe management of blood process for patients; however, the part played by the Transfusion Practitioner within haemovigilance is less well known. Transfusion Practitioner (TP) is a term used to encompass the many different roles that exist in transfusion medicine. These roles include but are not limited to, transfusion nurses, transfusion safety officers, haemovigilance officers, patient blood management coordinators. The focus of this article is to show the role of the Transfusion Practitioner (often referred to as a TP) in haemovigilance.

Haemovigilance can be defined as a set of surveillance procedures covering the whole transfusion chain from the collection of blood and its components to the follow-up of its recipients, intended to collect and assess information on unexpected or undesirable effects resulting from the therapeutic use of labile blood products and to prevent their occurrence and recurrence (thesis of Dr. J Wiersum-Osselton, the Netherlands 2013). Most TP's work in hospitals with a focus on the recipient side of the transfusion chain.

The TP involvement in Haemovigilance includes the investigation and reporting of transfusion reactions internally and externally to national Haemovigilance schemes. By conducting a thorough process review and communicating directly with clinical staff or patient, the TP can provide additional details that are needed to complete investigations. This extra information assists with the conclusion of the transfusion reaction investigation and recommendations for future transfusion plans for the patient.

Similarly, the TP is involved in adverse events reporting, where they often carry out root-cause analysis and in collaboration with others work on corrective and preventative measures. Surveillance is often achieved through audits which help to identify gaps in staff knowledge, topics for future education and contribute to quality improvement.

The TP acts as a liaison between the clinical and laboratory settings improving communication and understanding. They also liaise between the hospital, the blood supplier and the national haemovigilance agency. To this end, an essential part of the TP role is excellent communication and collaboration skills as they interact with staff on different levels, in multiple settings.

TP's promote safe transfusion practice through their participation in the development of much-needed resources, combining excellent knowledge in this field to support changes and quality improvement in transfusion policies, procedures, reference guides, digital systems, and educational resources. They also participate in the development and delivery of staff education, for instance, pre-transfusion sample collection, blood administration, and transfusion reactions. Staff education by a TP may be formal in the form of lectures, electronic and online and informal when staff can discuss a case or seek advice and ask questions. By maintaining a visible presence in the clinical setting, the TP ensures that staff have access to information and so support improved transfusion outcomes.

TP's (that must now begin to sound like a superhuman) participate in transfusion committees and other professional groups that strive to improve practice on regional and national levels. TP's also collaborate nationally and internationally to develop the role, learn from each other and alert each other of adverse events quickly. In most countries, this is the only way to share knowledge, best practice and enhance quality because no specialised training for TP's is available.

It is hoped that this article has demonstrated that the TP, a role which is not yet established in all countries, can help to enhance transfusion and patient safety. Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions, they have limited formal status. There is wide variation in working hours, allocated tasks, payment, and training. It is hoped that these issues are addressed over time.

The TP Steering Group, part of the Clinical Transfusion Working Party is conducting a survey to help better understand the role of the Transfusion Practitioner amongst the ISBT member countries and beyond. The TP Steering Group would be very much appreciate it if the time could be found to complete the survey. It is as important for those that do not have a Transfusion Practitioner to complete the survey as it is for those that do, so that ISBT gets an international picture of how the Transfusion Practitioner role might be part of the future of transfusion medicine. To access the survey, please visit [www.surveymonkey.com/r/survey\\_TP](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/survey_TP)