

To
The Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare
Government of Delhi

CC: Principal Secretary Health & Family Welfare,
Government of Delhi



Medical Support Group
streetmedicsindia@gmail.com
+91 93157 37311
@MedicAidSupport

Dated: 27.04.2020

Subject: Barriers in accessing blood requirements during the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown

Dear Sir,

We are a voluntary group of health professionals and citizens who are facilitating access to health care for patients during the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown in Delhi. This letter seeks to draw your attention to a particular concern regarding access to blood for patients at government hospitals that we have repeatedly faced.

1. Over the past week, we have dealt with several cases in which **patients in need of blood were asked to provide replacement blood donations to the hospital's blood bank**. In these cases, identifying and transporting blood donors to hospitals proved to be a particular challenge and precious hours were lost in resolving the need.
2. There was also an incident where a Delhi government hospital allowed **admission of a pregnant woman only after her family provided replacement blood**. The family had to incur **out of pocket expenditure** even while donating blood to the blood bank.
3. There have been barriers where **State government hospitals are not readily accepting donor cards issued by Delhi government hospitals**.
4. While we recognize that blood banks are facing blood shortages, insisting on replacement donations at this time is not feasible. **Given the situation of a pandemic, transporting donors to a hospital, thereby exposing them to the risk of infection is neither just nor prudent from the perspective of epidemic control**. Further, the National Blood Policy, 2007 has specifically called for replacement transfusions to be gradually phased out in order to achieve a 100% voluntary non-remunerated blood donation programme.

In this scenario, with the intention of responding promptly to the blood requirements of patients, as well as minimizing additional risk of exposure to the virus for donors, we request the following:

1. In order to ensure that voluntary blood donation takes place and blood banks are adequately replenished, **regular mobile blood donation camps** must be organized by the Government

of Delhi to allow donors to donate blood closer to their homes, and in a safe environment with reduced risk of exposure to the virus. A system to allow donors to reach the camps also needs to be arranged.

2. A notification be issued by the Government of Delhi to all hospitals to **relax donor replacement practices** while the lockdown is in place. Providing a replacement donor should not be mandatory for access to blood, and no one should be refused access to this essential resource under any circumstances.
3. The Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) of the Delhi government provides for provision of **free blood to pregnant women**. The same must be implemented to ensure pregnant women are not forced to provide replacement blood for admission.
4. A notification be issued by the Government of Delhi to ensure that **donor cards issued at one hospital are honored at all hospitals**, whether run by the State government, Central Government or Municipal Corporation of Delhi.
5. The **e-raktkosh.in website must be updated daily** to accurately represent the availability of blood in all Delhi hospitals. The website must provide **public notifications** regarding the number of camps held, units of blood collected and proportion of voluntary versus replacement blood donations used on a daily basis.

We seek your help in ensuring that patients are able to access blood without delay and additional hassles. Please reach out to us for any further information. We are happy to support the government in mobilizing volunteers for donations at these camps.

Thanking you,

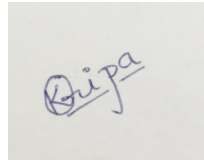
Sincerely,



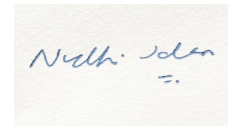
Dr. Sonali Vaid



Dr. Vandana Prasad



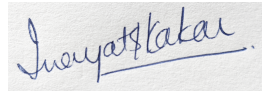
Kripa Jayaram



Nidhi Jalan



Dr. Sana Contractor



Inayat Singh Kakar

On behalf of,

Medical Support Group Delhi