

# Transfusion Reactions

**James Szymanski, MD**

Montefiore Medical Center

**Monika Paroder, MD, PhD**

Montefiore Medical Center

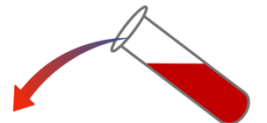
**Michael Karasick, MD**

Montefiore Medical Center

**Rokhsareh Khatami, MD**

Montefiore Medical Center

**Speaker(s) and Co-Authors**



# Disclosures

- **None**



# Topics To Cover

1. Transfusion reaction classification
2. Clinical and laboratory work-up of suspected reactions
3. Recommendations for management and prevention



## Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment



*Meghan Delaney, Silvano Wendel, Rachel S Bercovitz, Joan Cid, Claudia Cohn, Nancy M Dunbar, Torunn O Apelseth, Mark Popovsky, Simon J Stanworth, Alan Tinmouth, Leo Van De Watering, Jonathan H Waters, Mark Yazer, Alyssa Ziman, for the Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion (BEST) Collaborative*

Blood transfusion is one of the most common procedures in patients in hospital so it is imperative that clinicians are knowledgeable about appropriate blood product administration, as well as the signs, symptoms, and management of transfusion reactions. In this Review, we, an international panel, provide a synopsis of the pathophysiology, treatment, and management of each diagnostic category of transfusion reaction using evidence-based recommendations whenever available.

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- 2005-2006: Lack of cohesive national surveillance system for transfusion reactions (“hemovigilance”) seen as public health deficiency
  - AABB forms Interorganizational Task Force on Biovigilance
  - Dept. of HHS's Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) recommends Federal actions to partner with AABB and others to advance US hemovigilance initiatives
- 2009: CDC/AABB partnership pilots Hemovigilance (v1.0) within CDC’s NHSN system
  - Systematic tracking of transfusion reactions
  - Relies on standard, uniform and precise definitions for reporting
    - Harmonized with international definitions (ISBT/IHN)

### Recipient Hemovigilance

AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Biovigilance  
(Adverse Reactions/Incidents Working Group)  
in partnership with the  
US Centers for Disease Control National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN)



NHSN Hemovigilance Medical History – 2016  
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 US Centers for Disease Control National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN)**

## NHSN Hemovigilance Module Goals

- ❑ Provide a systematic method for monitoring transfusion-related adverse reactions and incidents
- ❑ Estimate burden of transfusion reactions
- ❑ Identify emerging threats to blood safety
- ❑ Close surveillance gaps with existing reporting systems
- ❑ Improve patient safety
- ❑ Minimize morbidity and mortality among transfusion recipients

NHSN Hemovigilance Medical History – 2016  
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# Transfusion Reaction Classification

## ➤ CDC Hemovigilance

- Categorizes transfusion reactions (TRxns) by specific case definitions
  - “The surveillance definitions are not intended as clinical diagnostic criteria or to provide treatment guidance.”
  - Primary source for FDA classification of fatal TRxns
- Passive surveillance
- Participation is voluntary
- Fulfills regulatory requirement w/ AABB Standards (33<sup>rd</sup> ed.)
  - 7.3 Classifying Adverse Events
    - “The [Blood Bank/Transfusion Service] shall use nationally recognized classifications for donor and patient adverse events.”
- College of American Pathologist Accreditation Program Standards (2020) –  
N/A

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) Manual: Biovigilance Component v2.6. Atlanta, GA: Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. Available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn/PDFs/Biovigilance/BV-HV-protocol-current.pdf>. Accessed 4/8/2021.





### Section 3: Hemovigilance Module Adverse Reactions

Surveillance definitions are distinctly different from clinical definitions. Surveillance definitions are designed to capture data consistently and reliably in order to identify trends and inform quality improvement practices. The surveillance definitions are not intended as clinical diagnostic criteria or to provide treatment guidance.

#### Defined Adverse Reactions

- Transfusion-associated circulatory overload (TACO)
- Transfusion-related acute lung injury (TRALI)
- Transfusion-associated dyspnea (TAD)
- Allergic reaction (where severity is severe, life threatening, or death)
- Hypotensive transfusion reaction
- Febrile non-hemolytic transfusion reaction (FNHTR)
- Acute hemolytic transfusion reaction (AHTR)
- Delayed hemolytic transfusion reaction (DHTR)
- Delayed serologic transfusion reaction (DSTR)
- Transfusion-associated graft vs. host disease (TAGVHD)
- Post-transfusion purpura (PTP)
- Transfusion-transmitted infection (TTI)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) Manual: Biovigilance Component v2.6. Atlanta, GA: Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn/PDFs/Biovigilance/BV-HV-protocol-current.pdf>. Accessed 4/8/2021.



## Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment



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# GRADE system

	Description	Methodological quality of supporting evidence	Implications
1A	Strong recommendation, high quality evidence	RCTs without important limitations or overwhelming evidence from observational studies	Strong recommendation, can apply to most patients in most circumstances without reservation
1B	Strong recommendation, moderate quality evidence	RCTs with important limitations (inconsistent results, methodological flaws, indirect, or imprecise) or exceptionally strong evidence from observational studies	Strong recommendation, can apply to most patients in most circumstances without reservation
1C	Strong recommendation, low quality or very low quality evidence	Observational studies or case series	Strong recommendation but might change when higher quality evidence becomes available
2A	Weak recommendation, high quality evidence	RCTs without important limitations or overwhelming evidence from observational studies	Weak recommendation, best action might differ depending on circumstances or patients' or societal values
2B	Weak recommendation, moderate quality evidence	RCTs with important limitations (inconsistent results, methodological flaws, indirect, or imprecise) or exceptionally strong evidence from observational studies	Weak recommendation; best action might differ depending on circumstances or patients' or societal values
2C	Weak recommendation, low quality or very low quality evidence	Observational studies or case series	Very weak recommendations; other alternatives might be equally reasonable

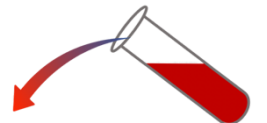
Used from Guyatt et al,<sup>8</sup> with permission. RCT=randomised controlled trial.

**Table 2: Evidence grading system by recommendation**

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# Clinical and laboratory work-up of suspected reactions

**Testing**  
**Classification**  
**Prevention**



# *Recognizing Reactions: signs and symptoms*

- Fever (at least 1° C rise in temperature)
- Chills or rigors
- Respiratory distress
  - Wheezing, dyspnea, cyanosis
- Acute changes in blood pressure
- Abdominal, chest, flank, or back pain
- Skin changes
  - Hives, itching, edema
- Hemoglobinuria
- Nausea/vomiting
- Abnormal bleeding
- Oliguria/anuria



➤ *I THINK MY PATIENT IS HAVING A  
TRANSFUSION REACTION...  
HAS THE TRANSFUSION BEEN STOPPED?*



# Suspected reaction: Clinical

1. Stop the transfusion
  - Keep line open w/ NS
2. Recheck blood product labeling and patient ID
3. Follow institution's BB policy
  1. At MMC: Product ID tag contains section with instructions:
    - Return remainder of product
    - Send pink top tube (Transfusion Reaction W/U Order in Epic) for:
      - Visual inspection for gross hemoglobinemia
      - DAT (Polyspecific)
      - Repeat Front type



# Suspected reaction: Clinical

## Document:

1. TRxn date/time
2. Volume transfused
3. Signs/Symptoms
4. VS
5. Management and clinical response
6. Specimens that were sent to BB



# Suspected reaction: Required Lab w/u

## College of American Pathologist Accreditation Program

### Transfusion Medicine Checklist (2025)

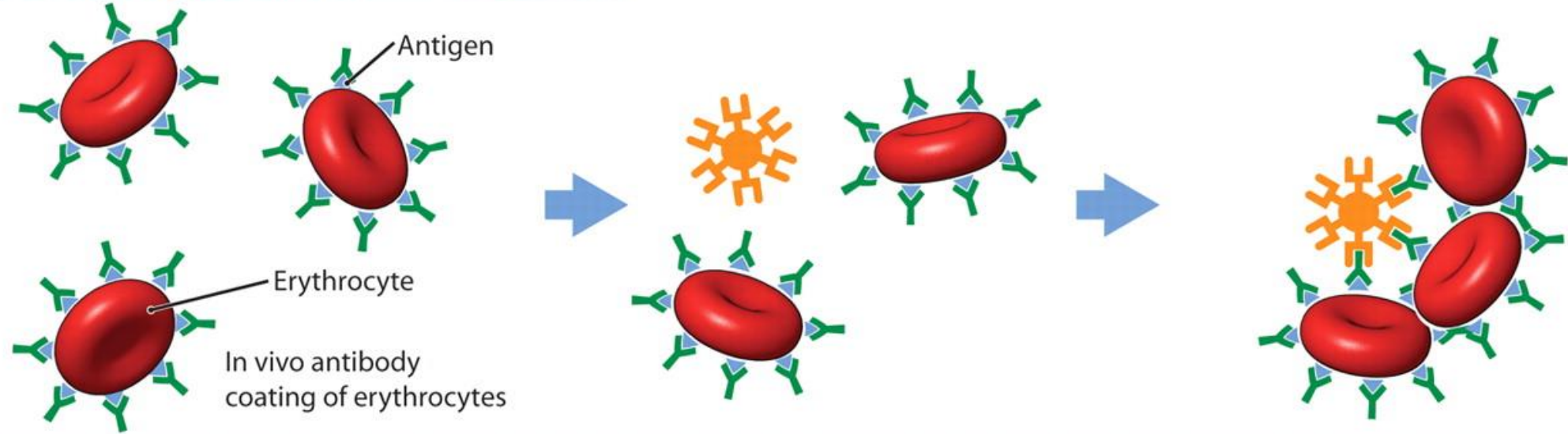
- **TRM.41850 Investigation of Suspected Hemolytic Transfusion Reaction**
- The immediate investigation of a suspected hemolytic transfusion reaction includes all of the following.
  1. Examination of patient identification, blood unit labels, and all pre-reaction records for possible errors in patient or blood identification at the bedside and in the laboratory
  2. Visual examination of post-reaction and pre-reaction (if available) serum or plasma for evidence of hemolysis
  3. ABO and direct antiglobulin test on post-reaction patient (recipient) blood sample

## AABB Standards for Blood Banks and Transfusion Services, 33rd Edition

- **7.5.2.1 For suspected hemolytic transfusion reactions the evaluation shall include the following:**
  - 1) The patient's posttransfusion reaction serum or plasma shall be inspected for evidence of hemolysis. Pretransfusion samples shall be used for comparison.
  - 2) A repeat ABO group determination shall be performed on the posttransfusion sample.
  - 3) A direct antiglobulin test shall be performed on the posttransfusion sample. If the result is positive, the most recent pretransfusion sample shall be used for comparison.



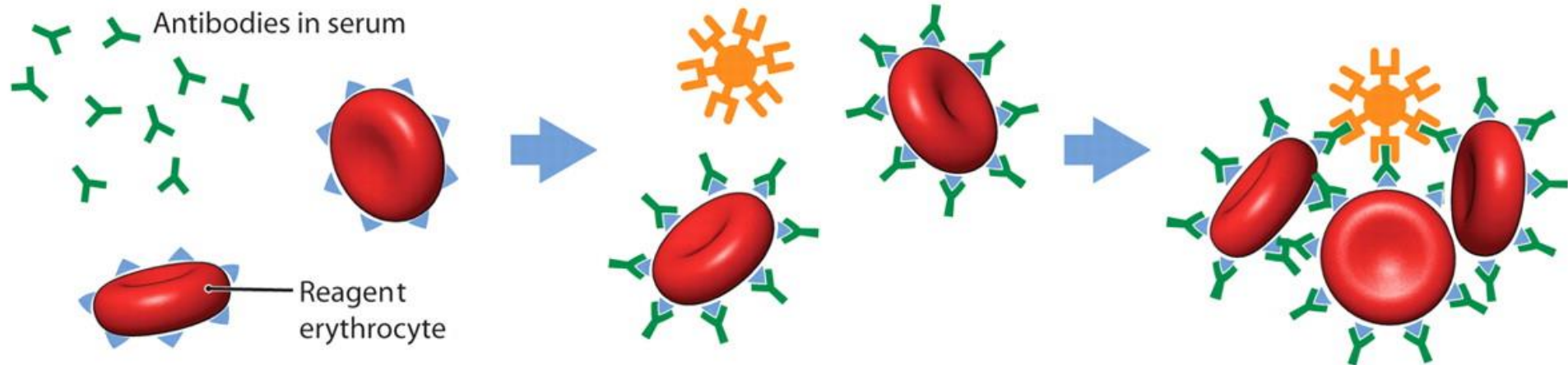
## Direct Antiglobulin Test



Anti-IgG AHG reagent added after erythrocytes are washed

AHG reagent causes IgG-coated erythrocytes to agglutinate

## Indirect Antiglobulin Test



# Classifying Transfusion Reactions

	Febrile	Afebrile
Acute	Acute Hemolytic Febrile Non-hemolytic Bacterial Contamination TRALI Thermal/mechanical hemolysis	TACO Allergic Pre-medicated FNHTR
Delayed	Delayed hemolytic TA-GVHD	Post-transfusion Purpura Iron overload



# Acute Hemolytic Reaction

## Presentation



- Fever/chills in >80%
- Pain: back, flank, infusion site or along infusion vein
- Sense of “impending doom” or anxiety
- Dyspnea
- Tachycardia
- Hypotension
- DIC or bleeding/oozing from IV sites
- Hemoglobinuria

## Incidence

- 2.2-7.9 per 100,000 units
- Fatal AHTR: 1 per 1.8 million units
- Products: RBCs, apheresis platelets
- Case outcomes: 7% mortality; 22% major morbidity

## Pathogenesis

Interaction of pre-formed antibodies to RBC antigens → Complement & phagocyte activation, intravascular hemolysis w/ anaphylatoxin production



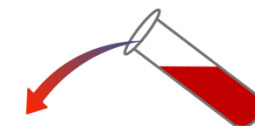
# Acute Hemolytic Reaction

- Management
1. STOP the transfusion
  2. Recheck patient and product ID
  3. Treat as shock/DIC: Maintain IV access
  4. IV fluids:
    - NS 0.5 – 1 L over 10 min
    - Lasix 40 mg IVP
    - maintain urinary output >100 ml/hr (adults) or >1ml/kg/hr
  5. AVOID TRANSFUSION until lab workup is complete

## Work-Up

- Return product with attached tubing
  - visual inspection
  - clerical check
- Post-transfusion patient sample
  - Repeat ABO, Hemolysis check, DAT

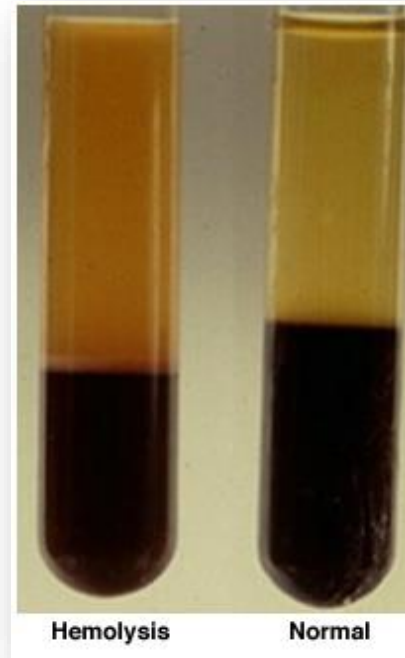
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- *Your patient is having a transfusion reaction...*
- *What lab indices might be helpful?*

*What results might be expected with an acute hemolytic reaction?*

- DAT + (or -)
- Cr ↑
- Bilirubin (indirect) ↑
- AST ↑
- LDH ↑
- Haptoglobin ↓
- UA (heme) ↑



- Serial CBCs also indicated
- DIC labs (PT, PTT, Fibrinogen, and D-dimer) if high suspicion for intravascular hemolysis or increased bleeding



# Acute Hemolytic Reaction

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Prevention	1. Technology/procedures ensuring accurate pt ID	Grade
	• Two person check	1. 1A
	2. ABO Confirmation	2. 1A
	• Two sample policy	

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Supplement to: Delaney M, Wendel S, Bercovitz RS, et al, for the Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion (BEST) Collaborative. Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Lancet 2016; published online April 12. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01313-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01313-6).



# Classifying Transfusion Reactions

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# Febrile Nonhemolytic Reaction

## Presentation/ Definition

CDC Hemovigilance Module  
Surveillance Protocol v2.6  
[www.cdc.gov/nhsn](http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn)

- Occurs during or w/in 4 hrs of transfusion cessation &
  - $>1^{\circ}\text{C}$   $\Delta$  from pre- & temp above  $38^{\circ}\text{C}$
  - Or chills/rigors present
- Clinicolab dx of exclusion

## Incidence

- 1-3:100 pre-storage LR RBCs
- 1.4:100 apheresis platelets
- 11-26:100 post-storage LR (obsolete)

## Pathogenesis

- Multifactorial: pyogenic cytokines, recipient HNA or HLA antibodies, biological response modifiers (BRMs)/bioactive lipids, donor HNA or HLA antibodies

## Work-Up

- Return product with attached tubing
- visual inspection
  - clerical check
- Post-transfusion patient sample
- Repeat ABO, Hemolysis check, DAT



# Febrile Nonhemolytic Reaction

Management	1. Antipyretics for fever	1. 1A
	2. Meperidine for shivering	2. 1C
Prevention	<b>1. No role for antipyretic prophylaxis<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>1. 1A</b>
	2. Pre-storage LR	2. 1A
	3. Plasma removal	3. 2C
	4. Platelet additive solution	4. 1B
	• FNHTR rate 0.5% → 0.17%	

*“Premedication with antipyretics does not decrease rate of reactions in most patients and should be discouraged (grade 1A).”<sup>2</sup>*

1. Supplement to: Delaney M, Wendel S, Bercovitz RS, et al, for the Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion (BEST) Collaborative. Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Lancet 2016; published online April 12. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01313-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01313-6).
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April 30, 2026



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# Suspected Septic Transfusion Reaction

## Presentation

- May be suspected w/ following s/sx:
  - Sudden onset temperature increase ( $>2^{\circ}\text{C}$   $\Delta$  or  $>39^{\circ}\text{C}$ )
  - Rigors
  - Tachycardia
  - Hypotension
  - Septic shock
  - DIC
  - Nausea/vomiting
- Requires cx to confirm; d/dx AHTR and FNHTR

## Incidence

Apheresis platelets: 9.1-14.3 per 1 million units

- 1:5000 (+) culture rate

RBCs: 5.6 per 10 million units

- 1:170,000 (+) culture rate

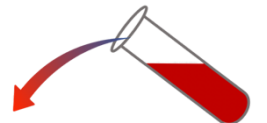
Plasma: 2.8 per 10 million units



# Suspected Septic Transfusion Reaction

- Pathogenesis
- (1) Donor skin
    - inadequate skin cleansing/disinfection
    - introduction of skin plug into donor bag, with bacteria hiding in adnexal structures or scarred, pitted skin
  - (2) Asymptomatic/transient donor bacteremia
    - usually normal GI flora (GNR)
  - (3) Introduction during collection, processing, or transfusion

- Work-Up
- Return product with attached tubing
- visual inspection
  - clerical check
- Post-transfusion patient sample
- Repeat ABO, Hemolysis check, DAT
- Product gram stain and culture (alert BB if high suspicion)
- Culture patient



# Suspected Septic Transfusion Reaction

## Definition

CDC Hemovigilance Module  
Surveillance Protocol v2.6  
[www.cdc.gov/nhsn](http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn)

- Definitive product imputability requires:
  - Isolation of same pathogen in recipient and product AND
  - No other potential exposures

## Management

Empiric broad-spectrum antibiotics

1A

## Prevention

Donor collection policies:

1. Diversion of first 10-50 mL
2. Bacterial surveillance of platelet units

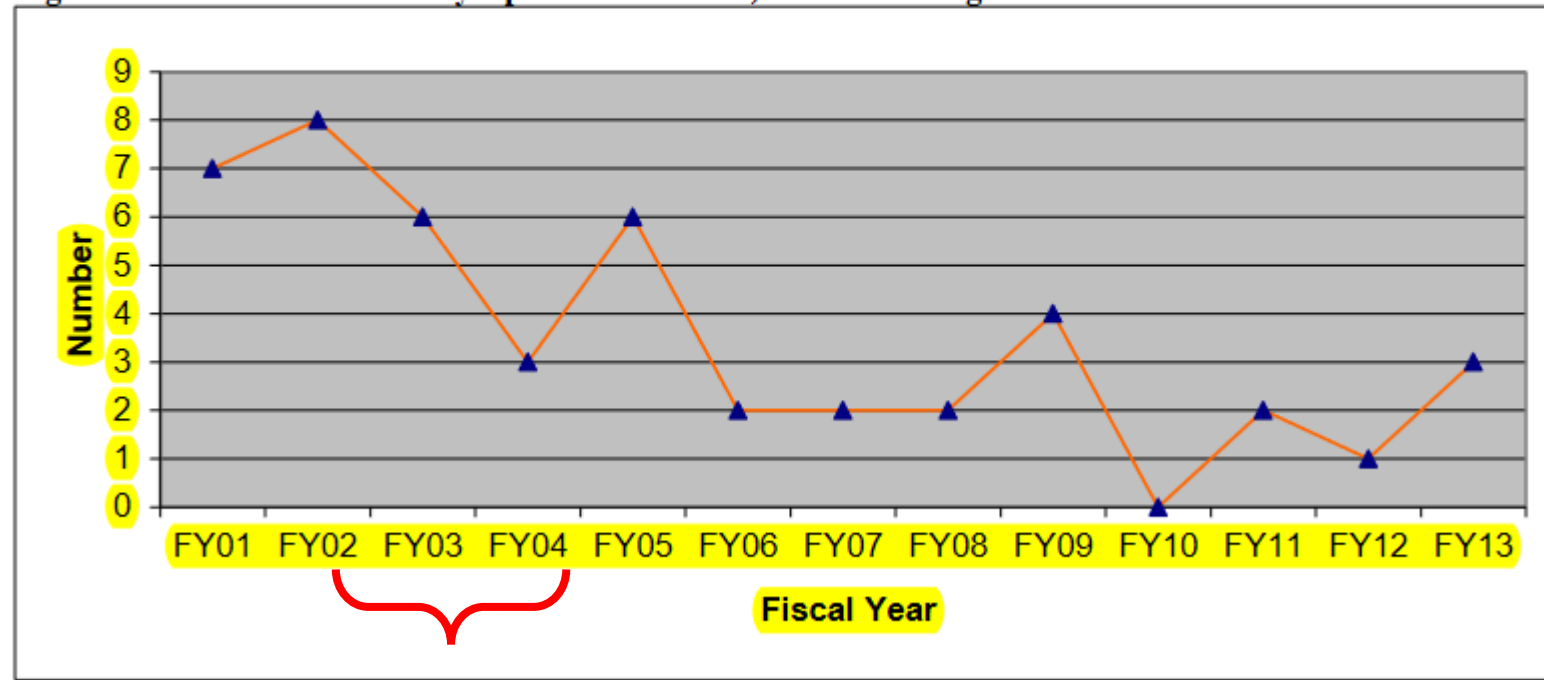
1. 1B

2. 1B



# Transfusion Fatalities Reported to FDA

Figure 6: Bacterial Infection by Apheresis Platelets, FY2001 through FY2013



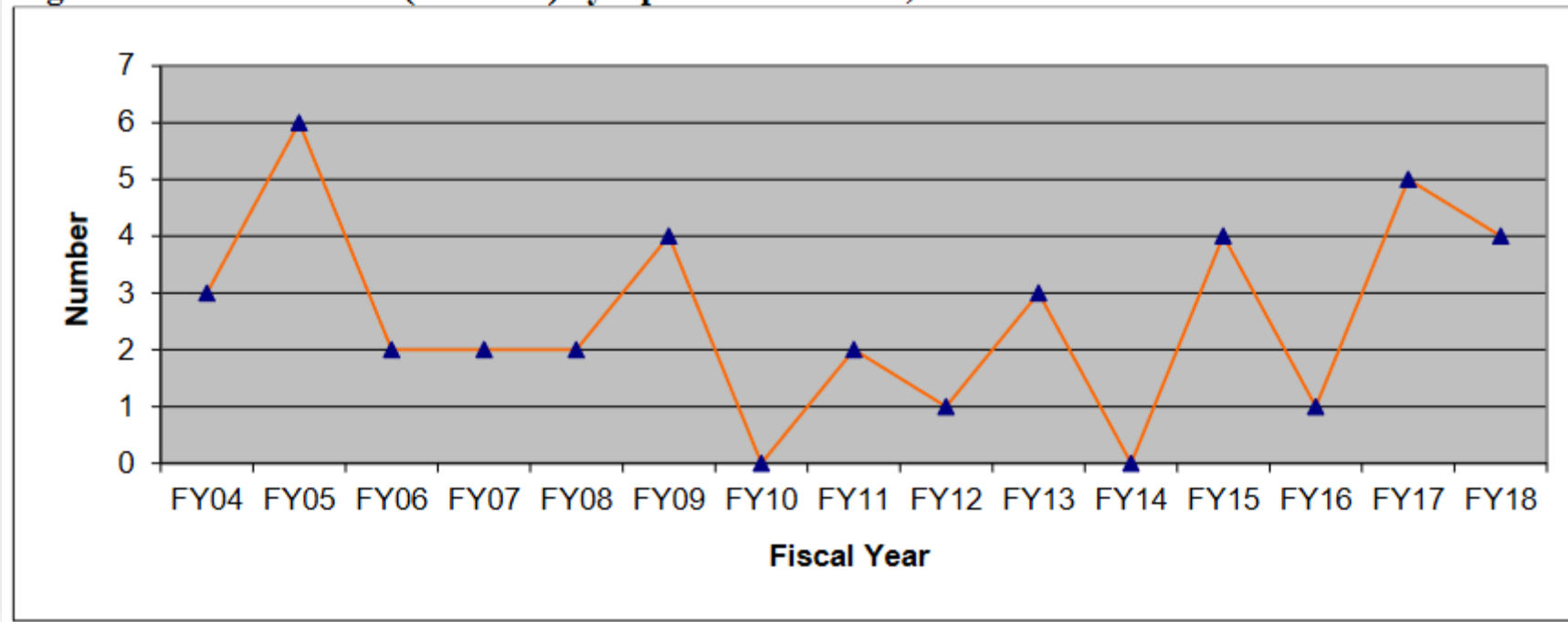
- 2002-2004:
  - CAP & AABB issue guidance and update their accreditation standards to require practices that limit contamination
    - Suggested diversion, addressed phlebotomy techniques and recommended surveillance culture
    - Surveillance cx implementation a/w reduction in gram (-) contamination/STR rate in subsequent period



# Transfusion Fatalities Reported to FDA

Fatalities Reported to FDA Following Blood Collection and Transfusion Annual Summary for FY2018

**Figure 6: Contamination (bacterial) by Apheresis Platelets, FY2004 – FY2018**



<https://www.fda.gov/media/136907/download>



# Detection of septic transfusion reactions to platelet transfusions by active and passive surveillance

Hong Hong,\* Wenbin Xiao,\* Hillard M. Lazarus, Caryn E. Good, Robert W. Maitta, and Michael R. Jacobs

Departments of Pathology and Medicine, University Hospitals Case Medical Center and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Cleveland, OH

## Key Points

- Bacterial sepsis from contaminated platelet transfusions continues to occur despite recent interventions; additional measures are needed.
- STR to platelet transfusion is frequently not recognized or reported; use of recent AABB criteria showed highest diagnostic sensitivity.

Septic transfusion reactions (STRs) resulting from transfusion of bacterially contaminated platelets are a major hazard of platelet transfusion despite recent interventions. Active and passive surveillance for bacterially contaminated platelets was performed over 7 years (2007-2013) by culture of platelet aliquots at time of transfusion and review of reported transfusion reactions. All platelet units had been cultured 24 hours after collection and released as negative. Five sets of STR criteria were evaluated, including recent AABB criteria; sensitivity and specificity of these criteria, as well as detection by active and passive surveillance, were determined. **Twenty of 51 440 platelet units transfused (0.004%; 389 per million) were bacterially contaminated by active surveillance and resulted in 5 STRs occurring 9 to 24 hours posttransfusion; none of these STRs had been reported by passive surveillance. STR occurred only in neutropenic patients transfused with high bacterial loads.** A total of 284 transfusion reactions (0.55%) were reported by passive surveillance. None of these patients had received contaminated platelets. However, 6 to 93 (2.1%-32.7%) of these 284 reactions met 1 or more STR criteria, and sensitivity of STR criteria varied from 5.1% to 45.5%. These results document the continued occurrence of bacterial contamination of

platelets resulting in STR in neutropenic patients, failure of passive surveillance to detect STR, and lack of specificity of STR criteria. These findings highlight the limitations of reported national STR data based on passive surveillance and the need to implement further measures to address this problem such as secondary testing or use of pathogen reduction technologies. (*Blood*. 2016; 127(4):496-502)

Hong, Hong, et al. "Detection of septic transfusion reactions to platelet transfusions by active and passive surveillance." *Blood* 127.4 (2016): 496-502.

April 30, 2026



**2019-2020: Citing Hong et al 2016 and the cont'd reporting of fatal STRs w/ current practice, FDA updates its Plt Guidance**

**Bacterial Risk Control Strategies for Blood Collection Establishments and Transfusion Services to Enhance the Safety and Availability of Platelets for Transfusion**

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**Guidance for Industry**

- Gives options for risk mitigation:
  1. Enhanced bacterial testing
    - Large Volume, Delayed Sampling (LVDS)
      - Sampling requirements for cx changed from former practice of 8 mL @ 24hrs, allowing aerobic cx only, to either:
        - 16 @ 36 using aerobic and anerobic for 5 day storage
        - 16 @ 48 using aerobic and anerobic for 7 day storage
  2. Pathogen Reduction Technology
    - Uses photosensitive nucleic acid cross-linkers (e.g., psoralen) to inactivate infectious agents



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# TACO

Clinical Presentation	Acute onset resp s/sx w/in 12 hrs post-transfusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dyspnea, tachypnea, decreased O2 sats</li><li>• Pulm edema on imaging</li><li>• New/worsened fluid overload signs: crackles, orthopnea, cough, S3, frothy sputum</li></ul>
Incidence	<i>Uncertain estimates 2/2 underreporting:</i> 1-8% of transfused recipients, 6% in ICU patients 1.4 per 1,000 units transfused
Pathogenesis	Inability of the recipient's cardiopulmonary system to tolerate the volume or rate of transfusion → pulmonary edema Risk factors: Elderly, h/o ESRD/HD, CHF

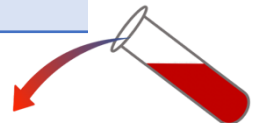


# TACO Surveillance definitions

Organization	ISBT-IHN-AABB (international consensus) and CDC HM v2.6	Examples <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn">www.cdc.gov/nhsn</a>
Surveillance Case Definition	At least 1 required(*) criterion w/ onset w/in 12 hrs, & total of $\geq 3$ criteria	
Resp system*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acute/worsening resp compromise*, OR</li> <li>2. Acute/worsening pulm edema*</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. dyspnea, tachypnea, decreased O2 sats</li> <li>2. Imaging, crackles, orthopnea, cough, S3, frothy sputum</li> </ol>
CV system	Unexplained CV changes	↑ CVP, Left HF s/sx (new tachycardia, hypertension, widened pulse pressure, JVD, ↑ cardiac silhouette or peripheral edema)
Fluid	Evidence of fluid overload / improvement w/ diuresis	
Biomarkers	Elevated biomarker (e.g., NT-pro-BNP) > 1.5 pretransfusion	

Wiersum-Osselton, Johanna C., et al. "Revised international surveillance case definition of transfusion-associated circulatory overload: a classification agreement validation study." *The Lancet Haematology* (2019).

April 30, 2026



# TACO

Management	Diuretics & supportive care		
Prevention	1. Slow infusion rate	1.	2C
	2. Avoid concurrent crystalloids	2.	2C
	3. Monitor VS closely	3.	2C

Supplement to: Delaney M, Wendel S, Bercovitz RS, et al, for the Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion (BEST) Collaborative. Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Lancet 2016; published online April 12. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01313-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01313-6).



# Classifying Transfusion Reactions

	Febrile	Afebrile
Acute	Acute Hemolytic Febrile Non-hemolytic Bacterial Contamination <b>TRALI</b> Thermal/mechanical hemolysis	TACO Allergic Pre-medicated FNHTR
Delayed	Delayed hemolytic TA-GVHD	Post-transfusion Purpura Iron overload



# TRALI

## Clinical Presentation

- **Hypoxemia:** in an intubated patient this could manifest as a change in oxygenation or increased oxygen requirements (100 percent, by definition)
- **Pulmonary infiltrates on chest radiography** (100 percent, by definition; the cardiac silhouette is classically normal)
- If previously intubated, pink frothy airway secretions from the endotracheal tube (56 percent)
- Fever (33 percent)
- Hypotension (32 percent)
- Cyanosis (25 percent)

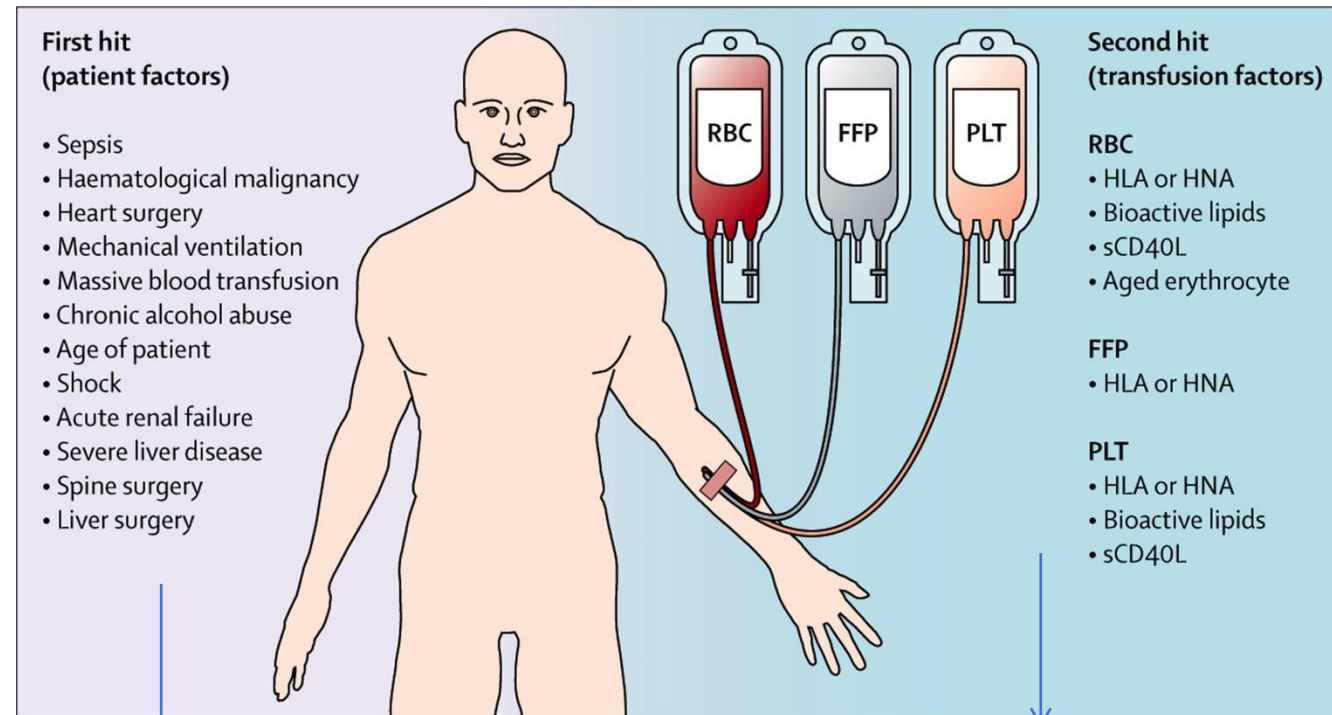
## Incidence (post risk mitigation)

Plasma: 0.4 per 100,000  
Apheresis platelets: 1 per 100,000  
RBC: 0.5 per 100,000



# TRALI

## Pathogenesis



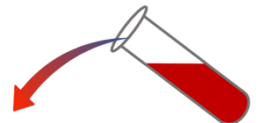
Primes Neutrophils

Transfusion factors activates neutrophil  
Pulmonary capillary leak and edema



# TRALI Surveillance definitions

Organization	CDC Hemovigilance Module Surveillance Protocol v3.0 <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn">www.cdc.gov/nhsn</a>	Delphi panel of experts (international)
Surveillance Dx criteria	Must meet all criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ALI w/in 6 hrs</li><li>• Hypoxemia, either by:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PaO<sub>2</sub>/FiO<sub>2</sub> ≤300</li><li>• SaO<sub>2</sub> &lt;90% on RA</li><li>• Other clinical evidence</li></ul></li><li>• Bilateral infiltrates on imaging</li><li>• No evidence of pre-existing ALI</li><li>• No left atrial hypertension/TACO</li></ul>	<u>TRALI Type I</u> – No ARDS risks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• W/in 6 hrs:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Acute onset</li><li>2. Hypoxemia, either by:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. PaO<sub>2</sub>/FiO<sub>2</sub> ≤300</li><li>2. SaO<sub>2</sub> &lt;90% on RA</li></ol></li><li>3. Bilateral pulm edema on imaging</li><li>4. No left atrial hypertension</li></ol></li></ul> <u>TRALI Type II</u> – pts w/ ARDS/risks but who experience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Acute hypoxemia (defined above) post transfusion</li><li>2. Despite stable resp status 12hrs prior to transfusion</li></ol>



**TABLE 4. ARDS risk factors according to the Berlin definition (with slight modification due to consideration of the transfusion setting)\***

**Direct**

Pneumonia  
Aspiration of gastric contents  
Inhalational injury  
Pulmonary contusion  
Pulmonary vasculitis  
Drowning

**Indirect**

Nonpulmonary sepsis  
Major trauma<sup>†</sup>  
Pancreatitis  
Severe burns  
Noncardiogenic shock\*  
Drug overdose

\* Multiple (massive) transfusion is included in the Berlin definition of ARDS risk factors; however, we have removed it from this list because we recommend that ARDS occurring during or within 6 hours after multiple transfusions be classified as TRALI, provided no other ARDS risk factors (as listed in this table) are present. One example of a case scenario of multiple (massive) transfusion that fits the criteria for TRALI Type I is acute gastrointestinal bleeding without trauma or any other ARDS risk factors.

† Major trauma is defined as multiple fractures (two or more major long bones, an unstable pelvic fracture, or one major long bone and a major pelvic fracture).<sup>20</sup> An alternate definition proposed by the Panel is an injury severity score of greater than 15.

Vlaar APJ, Toy P, Fung M, et al. A consensus redefinition of transfusion-related acute lung injury. *Transfusion* 2019; 59(7):2465-2476. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/trf.15311>

30, 2026



# TRALI D/dx Surveillance definitions

Organization	Delphi panel of experts (international)
Surveillance Dx criteria for other entities in the d/dx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>TRALI/TACO cannot be distinguished</u>: Findings compatible w/ TRALI and w/ TACO and/or lack of data to establish LAH status</li><li>• <u>ARDS</u>: Pts who have risk factors for ARDS and deteriorate as a result of them (unrelated to transfusion / pt already deteriorating)</li></ul>



# TRALI

Work-Up	Return product with attached tubing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- visual inspection</li><li>- clerical check</li></ul> Post-transfusion patient sample <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Repeat ABO, Hemolysis check, DAT</li></ul> Patient (and donor) testing may be performed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- HLA/HNA typing and antibody testing <i>(in 30% of cases no antibody is found)</i></li></ul>
Management	Supportive (1A) ECMO (2C)
Prevention	Platelet additive solutions (2C) Washed cellular products (2C) Screening & selecting blood donors (2C)



# Classifying Transfusion Reactions

	Febrile	Afebrile
Acute	Acute Hemolytic Febrile Non-hemolytic Bacterial Contamination TRALI Thermal/mechanical hemolysis	TACO Allergic Pre-medicated FNHTR
Delayed	Delayed hemolytic TA-GVHD	Post-transfusion Purpura Iron overload



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

CDC Hemovigilance Module Surveillance Protocol v2.6  
[www.cdc.gov/nhsn](http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn)



Within four hours of transfusion

Mild

- Urticarial, itching, erythema

Moderate

- Mucosal involvement: Edema/erythema of conjunctiva, periorbital, lips, tongue, uvula, bradycardia, hypotension
- Angioedema

Severe

- Anaphylactic
- Respiratory : laryngeal (tightness in the throat, dysphagia, dysphonia, hoarseness, stridor) or pulmonary (dyspnea, cough, wheezing/bronchospasm, hypoxemia)
- Cardiovascular/CNS: hypotension, syncope, collapse, incontinence
- Gastrointestinal: abdominal pain, vomiting



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

## Incidence<sup>1</sup>

- Overall: 112.2 per 100,000 units
- RBCs: 53.6 per 100,000 units
- Platelets: 302 per 100,000 units
- Plasma: 105.7 per 100,000 units
- Cryoprecipitate: 4.8 per 100,000 units
- Granulocytes: Unknown
- Anaphylaxis: 8 per 100,000 units

## Pathogenesis

- 1) Recipient/donor pre-formed IgE against donor/recipient antigens (bidirectional) causes degranulation of recipient mast cells/basophils
- 2) Anaphylactic: same as (1), w/ serum protein deficiencies occ implicated:
  - ?IgA deficiency w/ anti-IgA in recipient (***phenomenon disputed<sup>2-4</sup>***)
  - Haptoglobin deficiency

1. Supplement to: Delaney M, Wendel S, Bercovitz RS, et al, for the Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion (BEST) Collaborative. Transfusion reactions: prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Lancet 2016; published online April 12. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01313-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01313-6).
2. Sandler SG, Eder AF, Goldman M, Winters JL. The entity of immunoglobulin A-related anaphylactic transfusion reactions is not evidence based. Transfusion. 2015 Jan;55(1):199-204. doi: 10.1111/trf.12796. Epub 2014 Jul 28. PMID: 25066014.
3. Sandler SG, Vassallo RR. Anaphylactic transfusion reactions. Transfusion. 2011 Nov;51(11):2265-6. doi: 10.1111/j.1537-2995.2011.03404.x. PMID: 22023182.
4. Sandler SG, Eckrich R, Malamut D, Mallory D. Hemagglutination assays for the diagnosis and prevention of IgA anaphylactic transfusion reactions. Blood. 1994 Sep 15;84(6):2031-5. PMID: 8081004.



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

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Work-Up for moderate-to-severe reactions

Return product with attached tubing

- visual inspection
- clerical check

Post-transfusion patient sample

- Repeat ABO, Hemolysis check, DAT

For anaphylaxis, consider w/u for serum protein deficiencies (IgA, haptoglobin) and other allergens (e.g., drugs, latex)

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# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

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## Management

- STOP the transfusion
  - Administer H<sub>1</sub> antihistamine (e.g., diphenhydramine 25 to 50 mg, PO or IV) (1A)
    - *If purely urticarial and vital signs stable, may resume transfusion if reaction responds to treatment*
  - Moderate reaction:
    - Add corticosteroids (hydrocortisone 100 mg IV, prednisone 50 mg PO, or methylprednisolone 125 mg IV) (1C)
- 



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

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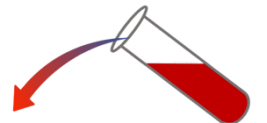
- Management • Severe/Anaphylactic:
- Epinephrine, 0.01 mg/kg of a 1:1000 (1 mg/mL) solution, to a maximum of 0.5 mg (adult) or 0.3 mg (child) (1A)
  - Airway maintenance and High-flow (>8-10L via face mask) supplemental O<sub>2</sub> (1C)
  - rapid 0.5-2L bolus resuscitation of hypotension with crystalloid solution (0.9% saline) (1C)
  - Recumbent position if tolerated
  - Adjuncts: antihistamine (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>), albuterol 2.5 to 5 mg/3mL (adult), 2.5 mg/3mL (child), Hydrocortisone 200 mg (adult) maximum 100 mg (child) or Methylprednisolone 50–100 mg (adult), 1 mg/kg, maximum 50 mg (child) (1C)
- 



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

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- Prevention Usually an idiosyncratic interaction between recipient and specific donor proteins that cannot be identified
- **In patients with no history of reaction or only previous *mild* allergic reactions, pre-medication with antihistamines and/or glucocorticoids is NOT indicated (2C)**
  - Severe or repeat moderate reactions:
    - Supernatant removal or wash (1C)
    - or platelet additive solution (1C)
    - pre-medicate w/ antihistamines (2C)
- 



# Allergic Transfusion Reactions

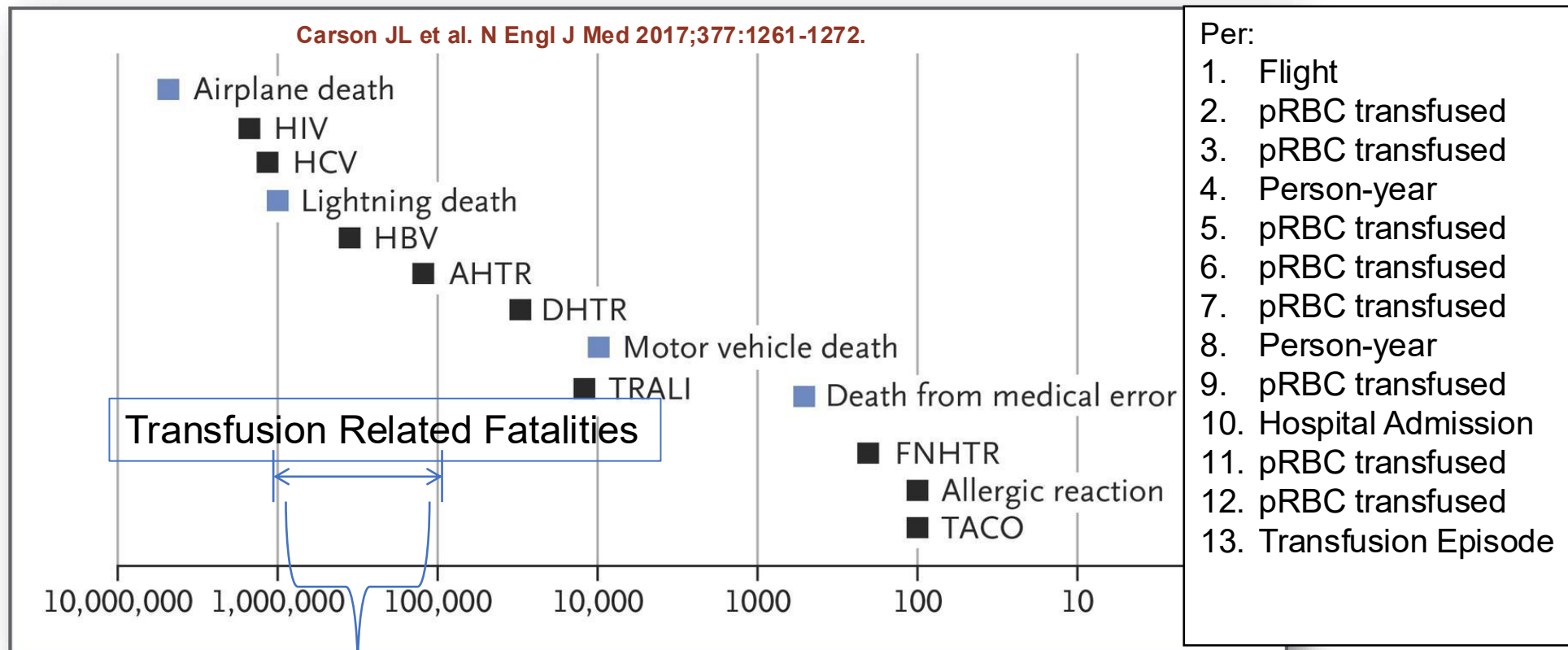
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## Prevention Anaphylactic

- Discuss w/ allergist/immunologist and Transfusion Medicine (1C)
  - Administer transfusion in clinical area with direct observation and resuscitation capabilities (2C)
  - Washed/plasma-reduced cellular components (2C)
  - Premedication w/ antihistamine (2C)
- 

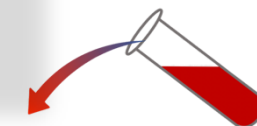


# Infectious and Noninfectious Adverse Effects of Red-Cell Transfusions as Compared with Other, Unrelated Risks



Transfusion Related Fatalities

Vamvakas EC, Blajchman MA. Transfusion-related mortality: the ongoing risks of allogeneic blood transfusion and the available strategies for their prevention. Blood. 2009;113(15):3406-17.



# Additional References

- AABB Technical Manual, 17<sup>th</sup> ed
- Petrides, Stack, Cooling, et al. Practical Guide to Transfusion Medicine, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Shaz, Hillyer, Roshal, et al. Transfusion Medicine and Hemostasis: Clinical and Laboratory Aspects, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Elsevier, 2013.



# Thank you

➤ E-mail: [Mkarasick@montefiore.org](mailto:Mkarasick@montefiore.org)

