

Book Reviews

Screening donated blood for transfusion-transmissible infections; Recommendations (World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland) 2010. 67 pages. Price: CHF/US \$ 30.00; in developing countries: CHF/US \$ 21.00
ISBN 978-92-4-154788-8

Adequate supply of safe blood and blood products is an essential component of healthcare. Quality assured screening of donated blood for transfusion-transmissible infections (TTI) is the key element to achieve this goal. However, global data on testing for TTIs reveal wide variations in screening strategies as well as quality measures adopted, thus exposing recipients to high risk of acquiring these infections. In countries where effective blood screening strategies have been implemented, the risk of TTIs has declined significantly over the last two decades. This publication is specifically designed to guide the development of reliable blood screening programmes in countries where such systems are not yet fully established.

The WHO Recommendations on Screening Donated Blood for Transfusion-transmissible Infections have been developed as a result of the initiative by the Blood Transfusion Safety Team in the WHO Department of Essential Health Technologies. The document is based on the contribution of international experts in the field of transfusion medicine and microbiology from various geographic regions of the world.

The contents of the document have been divided into seven sections: Introduction; National blood screening programme for transfusion-transmissible infections; Screening assays; Screening for transfusion-transmissible infections; Blood screening, quarantine and release; Confirmatory testing and blood donor management; and Quality systems in blood screening. Each section is further sub-divided into subsections.

The Glossary of various terms is useful for providing clarity to the readers. References have also been cited for further reading.

The Introduction section aptly describes the constraints and challenges faced by developing and transitional countries, both at the policy level and operational level, in implementing national blood screening programmes. It also outlines the aims and objectives and the methodology of preparation of this document. The methodology is commendable and should be referred to while developing national guidelines on blood safety in any country. The second section describes a framework for establishing a screening strategy for TTIs as a component of the national blood policy. The efficient co-ordination of blood transfusion services at the national level is essential for an effective, sustainable and quality assured blood screening programme. This fact has been adequately emphasized, and useful guidelines and key issues are outlined for the design and development of a national blood screening programme for TTIs.

The third and fourth sections respectively discuss the screening assays and screening for TTIs. The section on screening assays provides information on available immunoassays and nucleic acid amplification technology testing and the suitability, selection and evaluation of the assays. The subsection on Selection of assays, Critical assay characteristics and Monitoring assay performance is a 'must-read' for all those concerned with blood transfusion services. An important note of caution has been inserted before introducing new technologies for blood screening. Section four gives specific recommendations for universal screening of all blood donations for four diseases which pose serious consequences for the recipient. These include screening for human immunodeficiency virus 1 and 2, hepatitis B, hepatitis

C and syphilis. The summary of screening markers, assays, recommendations and comments is tabulated in a clear and concise manner for ready reference. Recommendations for screening for other infections are based on endemicity and risk to special recipient groups. The contents of these two sections provide operational guidelines for TTI screening.

Management of blood donors who are reactive with screening tests for TTIs is a highly sensitive and essential issue, both from point of view of recipient safety and donor care. This WHO document incorporates guidelines on confirmatory testing for TTIs in screen reactive blood donors and subsequent blood donor counselling, referral and deferral. The seventh and final section outlines the key elements of the quality system for blood screening, including organizational management, quality standards, documentation, traceability, training assessment and maintenance and calibration.

This is a timely publication and provides evidence based ready and concise information for healthcare policy makers, transfusion medicine specialists, quality managers and technical staff. The recommendations would definitely help countries with limited resources to develop national blood screening programme and where such programmes are already established it will assist in further strengthening the quality systems.

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How to survive in medicine: Personally and professionally, Jenny Firth-Cozens and Jamie Harrison (Wiley-Blackwell, UK) 2010. 127 pages. Price: not mentioned.

ISBN 978-1-4051-9271-2

Medicine is a career that is both very rewarding and stressful. Starting life as a doctor is one of the highest challenges one can face. Most doctors would feel satisfied knowing that they are able to help people and are useful to them. Meeting a large variety of patients and people could be very interesting but challenging too.

Increasing levels of stress and depression among doctors have been reported from across the globe. Their inability to cope up with situations and pressures has led to an increase in the incidence of substance abuse and

suicides. These observations seem to have motivated the authors to take up a long-term longitudinal study on 300 doctors starting from their fourth year in medical school, to see which causes of stress and depression were job related and which were personal. A large part of the book has been based on the research literature about the difficulties and stressors of medicine as a career and also from the studies which have looked at the interventions that have been found to be successful in handling these situations at the workplace. It also reflects authors' own experience as a clinician and coach working with doctors of all ages.

The book is divided into the two parts: the first part comprising chapters one and two deals with issues related to individuals themselves and those related to the job being responsible for higher stress levels in doctors. The second part comprises chapters 3 to 13, and deals more with the various stressful situations and the ways to handle the stress.

The first part looks at the role of organizational culture and management and the quality of teamwork affecting the stress level of its employees. There are issues related to the profession itself like dealing with difficult patients, death and suffering, medical errors, complaints and litigation, changing health care infrastructure and expectations from patients and seniors which all add on to the reasons for increasing stress among medical professionals. This section also deals with the influence of various life events, early experiences and individual qualities like emotional intelligence, individual personality styles, gender and the expectations from self and others, on the likelihood of stress and depression occurring later amongst doctors.

The subsequent chapters deal with the issues of work-home balance, the role of individual personality styles and how these styles are interwoven with the demands of the profession and can influence the handling of relationship. The book also gives evidence from literature on the association of stress levels with practicing different specialties as residents and senior doctors. It also gives suggestions as to the choice of specialty according to one's personality type and coping abilities. The chapter 'Dealing with stress' underlines the reality of increased stress among doctors and the importance of recognizing its presence and ways to deal with it effectively, rather than deny it or succumb to it.

The next few chapters deal with the emotions of sadness, depression, anger, the problem of alcohol and

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