

## Therapeutic Apheresis Services

### Patient Information Leaflet – Plasma Exchange Procedure

#### Introduction

This leaflet has been written to give patients information about plasma exchange (sometimes called plasmapheresis). If you would like any more information or have any questions, please ask the doctors and nurses involved in your treatment at the NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) Therapeutic Apheresis Services Unit.

When you have considered the information given in this leaflet, and after we have discussed the procedure and its possible risks with you, we will ask you to sign a consent form to indicate that you are happy for the procedure to go ahead. Before any further procedures we will again check that you are happy to proceed.

#### What is a plasma exchange?

Blood is made up of red cells, white cells and platelets which are carried around in fluid called plasma. The plasma can be separated from the rest of your blood, removed and replaced, and this process is called plasma exchange. We can replace your plasma with either fresh donor plasma or human albumin solution which is the liquid part of the plasma obtained by processing the fresh plasma.

The function of plasma is to carry blood cells (red cells, white blood cells and platelets) and various antibodies, hormones, and proteins around your body. Plasma exchange is normally carried out when there is a problem caused by abnormal antibodies or proteins circulating in your plasma.

Antibodies, which normally help to protect you from infection, can begin to attack your own healthy cells, or an over production of proteins can cause your blood to become thicker and slow down the blood flow throughout your body. A plasma exchange can help improve your symptoms, although this may not happen immediately.

Although plasma exchange may help with symptoms, it will not normally cure your condition as it does not switch off the production of the harmful antibodies or proteins. It is likely that this procedure will form only one part of your treatment.

#### How do we perform Plasma Exchange?

Plasma exchange is performed using a machine called a Blood Cell Separator which can separate blood into its various parts. The machine separates and removes the plasma portion of your blood and

