

Update on screening policy of blood donors to prevent Zika virus

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

In view of declining global Zika virus infections and the introduction of Zika virus screening test by the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS), the BTS spokesperson today (March 11) announced an update on the donor screening policy for Zika virus with immediate effect. The BTS has earlier implemented precautionary deferral policy for prospective donors with risk or confirmed diagnosis of Zika virus infection.

Under the updated policy, prospective donors who have travelled to or resided in the Zika virus affected area(s) within 28 days and have no symptoms from the date of returning to Hong Kong, can now be accepted for blood donation after passing the eligibility screening. In addition to the requirement to declare their travel history, their blood will be tested for Zika virus by Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) to minimise the remote possibility of transfusion transmission.

The spokesperson pointed out that the decision has been made by the Hospital Authority (BTS) Expert Panel on Blood and Blood Products Safety after a critical review of the local and global epidemiology and balancing the risk on blood safety. Prospective donors are also reminded that donor deferral policies for countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic (e.g. Malaria and West Nile Virus) are still in place to ensure blood safety.

The detailed policy is available at BTS' website:

<https://www5.ha.org.hk/rcbts/enarticlelistview.asp?nid=344&bid=5&sid=0&MenuID=2>.

Prospective blood donors who have enquiries regarding the policy can call the donor centre and speak to our nursing staff when planning a blood donation.