Blood transfusions associated with infection

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A study of almost 25,000 coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) patients has shown that receiving blood from another person is associated with a two-fold increase in post-operative infection rates. The research, published in the open access journal *BMC Medicine*, also found considerable hospital variation in transfusion practices.

Mary Rogers, from the University of Michigan, USA, led a team of researchers who carried out the study. She said, "Clearly, blood transfusions are vital in the treatment of some conditions, such as life-threatening bleeding. However, over the past several decades a body of evidence has accumulated that indicates various adverse effects in patients who receive transfusions, particularly with exposure to allogeneic blood".

The researchers sought to assess hospital variation in blood use and outcomes in cardiac surgery patients, to see if unnecessary blood transfusions may be putting the safety of some patients at risk. Overall, 30% of the variation in transfusion practices was found to be attributable to the hospital where the CABG was performed. According to Rogers, "The safety of patients undergoing CABG will likely be improved if hospitals carefully review current guidelines on allogeneic blood transfusion, closely adhere to such guidelines, and institute interventions to reduce inappropriate use of blood transfusions in recipients of CABG".

More information: Hospital variation in transfusion and infection after cardiac surgery: a cohort study, Mary A. M. Rogers, Neil Blumberg,

Sanjay Saint, Kenneth M. Langa and Brahmajee K. Nallamothu, *BMC Medicine* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmed/

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