Screening cuts transfusion-transmitted babesiosis risk

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(HealthDay)—Screening for *Babesia microti* antibodies and DNA in

blood-donation samples is associated with a reduction in the risk of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis, according to a study published in the Dec. 8 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Erin D. Moritz, Ph.D., from the American Red Cross in Gaithersburg, Md., and colleagues performed arrayed fluorescence immunoassays (AFIAs) for *B. microti* antibodies and real-time polymerase-chain-reaction (PCR) assays for *B. microti* DNA on blood-donation samples from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Data on cases of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis were used to compare the proportions of screened versus unscreened donations that were infectious.

The researchers found that 0.38 percent (335 samples) of the 89,153 blood-donation samples tested were confirmed to be positive. Of these, 20 percent were PCR-positive; nine samples were antibody-negative, representing 13 percent of all PCR-positive samples. There were no reported cases of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis in association with screened donations in Connecticut and Massachusetts while there were 14 cases per 253,031 unscreened donations (odds ratio, 8.6; P = 0.05). Twenty-nine cases of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis were associated with infected donor blood.

"Blood-donation screening for antibodies to and DNA from *B. microti* was associated with a decrease in the risk of transfusion-transmitted babesiosis," the authors write.

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More information: Full Text (subscription or payment may be required)