

DISASTER TRANSFUSION EXPERIENCE

Contribution to Disaster Planning

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Introduction

Disaster planning in a University Hospital such as the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), imparts on the Blood Bank and its staff certain responsibilities which are geared to meet the transfusion needs of mass casualties in a relatively short period of time. The effective implementation of that plan depends largely on the integrity of established systems and procedures for blood procurement and its safe administration. The magnitude of the blood bank response to a disaster call, i.e. the number of blood units needed is dependent on the anticipated estimate of the number and nature of casualties. It is usually assumed that the plan would be implemented for a predictable period of time normally estimated in days or weeks at the most.

A special situation is faced when under unpredictable and protracted disaster conditions a University Hospital blood bank must still function even though its organizational system of blood procurement and collection has broken down. Such a situation was encountered at AUBMC in 1975 and 1976, and in June to September 1982, and was managed with minimal jeopardy to life. Due to the sustained pressure and especially after the area and the Hospital itself became a shelling target, we experienced unavoidable laxity in the standards for blood processing and administration due to the reduced number of trained personnel and to the dwindling supplies of reagents and blood collection bags.

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