26 October 2015

St George emergency blood donor panel farewelled

One of Queensland’s last two emergency blood donor panels at St George Hospital will be wound up next month thanks to improvements in blood transfusion technology and storage techniques.

Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Cameron Bardsley said donor panels historically had been established to provide emergency supplies of the universal O negative blood type at rural and regional hospitals more than two hours away by road from a suitable stock of blood.

Dr Bardsley is himself a member of the St George Hospital emergency blood donor panel.

“In days gone by, it was also important to have immediate access to freshly donated whole blood – which contains important clotting agents that can help stop bleeding,” he said.

“Blood donated to a blood transfusion service normally has these clotting agents and other components removed for other treatment purposes, leaving just the red blood cells.

“While these red blood cells are important, in cases of severe bleeding replacement of the clotting agents also is vital.

“Thanks to modern advances though, these clotting agents are now able to be supplied and stored on site at a hospital in powder form, so immediate access to a supply of fresh whole blood no longer is necessary.

“St George Hospital now will be able to keep appropriate stocks of O negative blood on hand, together with the preparations of modern blood clotting materials that are now available, in order to treat patients with major blood loss.

“As a result, there is no longer a need to have an emergency blood donor panel on hand to provide fresh whole blood.

“This will also reduce the slight risk to transfusion recipients of receiving what is essentially unscreened blood from a donor panel member.”

Dr Bardsley said the new procedures for supplying and storing blood and blood transfusion agents at St George Hospital would take effect from 15 November.

The St George blood donor panel was farewelled and thanked for it contributions to the community at a special function at the hospital on 26 October hosted by South West Hospital and Health Service Board Chair Lindsay Godfrey and the Australian Red Cross.
Mr Godfrey said the St George and Goondiwindi panels were the last two remaining emergency blood donor panels in Queensland.

“As such, it’s fitting that we give our local panel members here in St George a formal and fond farewell.

“The panel members have provided a very valuable service for which they deserve the thanks of the South West HHS and the broader community in the St George region,” Mr Godfrey said.

“I hope that as many panel members as possible go on to become regular blood donors with the Australian Red Cross when they visit Toowoomba or Brisbane.

“Our thanks go to them for the public-spirited service they have provided in St George.”

ENDS

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