

Options for possible changes to the blood donation service: health economics modelling

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Plain English summary

The HEMO study

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Plain English summary

Blood transfusions are important in many aspects of NHS care, including general surgery and organ transplantation. Overall demand for blood is decreasing, and demand for particular blood types is also growing. To increase the supply of high-demand blood, NHS Blood and Transplant is considering potential service changes to encourage donors to give blood more often. The separate INTERVAL study of 45,000 blood donors investigated the safety of donating blood more frequently than currently allowed.

This study looked at the costs of each potential service, and also surveyed 32,924 blood donors, to estimate the impact on the amount of blood collected. The study used data from these surveys, the INTERVAL study and donors' current donation records, as well as cost information, to report which possible service changes were best value for money.

Donors give blood at either a 'static donor centre' or a 'mobile session' (where blood is collected by a team who travel around to different venues). The study found that donors at static donor centres would donate more if centres were open on weekday evenings or at weekends, and this would be a relatively cost-effective way of increasing the supply of blood that is in high demand. Giving donors a health report (e.g. with measurements such as blood pressure or cholesterol) would not be cost-effective. Some donors said that they would stop donating if changes to the blood collection service meant that they had to travel for longer to donate blood.

Allowing donors to donate more often could increase the supply of blood in the short term. However, more donors would be turned away from appointments because of low iron, which may lead them to stop donating, and so it is unclear whether or not this would be a cost-effective way to increase the supply of blood in the long term.

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