Carter BloodCare

To: Transfusion Services Managers
From: Hospital Relations
Date: April 27, 2020
Re: Change in Donor Eligibility Rules

By Dr. Laurie Sutor, vice president of Medical and Technical Services, Carter BloodCare

On April 2, 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which sets guidelines for blood donor eligibility in the United States, announced new guidelines. These new rules will allow many individuals, previously not eligible to give blood, to start donating. Although the changes are allowed by FDA to be effective immediately, blood centers such as Carter BloodCare need time to write procedures, modify their computer systems, and train their staff on how to implement these changes safely.

Here at Carter BloodCare we are working on implementing them as soon as we possibly can, but it will take several weeks (possibly even months) to get them in place. Please be patient with us.

Examples of the changes (in the words of this author, not the FDA) include:

- Removal of the deferral for persons who lived in Europe for 5 years or more because of risk of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD or Mad Cow) from 1980 to the present. (This excludes England, Ireland and France, however. That deferral will remain.)
- Removal of the deferral for persons who were stationed with the military in Europe from 1980 to 1996 for risk of vCJD.
- Removal of the deferral for taking bovine insulin for risk of variant CJD.
- A change in deferral period from one year, to three months, for any possible blood exposure (tattoo or piercing in an unlicensed facility, needle stick exposure, transfusion).
- A change in deferral period from one year, to three months, for male-male sexual contact.
- A change in deferral from permanent, to three months, for illicit drug use with a needle.
- A change in deferral from one year, to three months, for contact with a prostitute.
- A change in deferral from permanent, to three months, for ever having sold sex.
- A change in deferral period from one year, to three months, after travel to a malarial endemic area (as long as you were not a resident of a malarial endemic country).

There were some other changes, as well, that will affect a minority of individuals that are not listed here in the interest of space.

Note: These changes were made after careful study of risks and benefits to the blood supply by panels of experts in our field. A great deal of scientific evidence has been evaluated, as well as experience in other countries with these criteria, in certain cases. The public should not be concerned about these changes endangering the safety of the blood supply. The FDA does not make changes lightly and only with great deliberation.

The documents can be reviewed at:

https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/revised-recommendations-reducing-risk-human-immunodeficiency-virus-transmission-blood-and-blood

https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/recommendations-reduce-possible-risk-transmission-creutzfeldt-jakob-disease-and-variant-creutzfeldt

https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/revised-recommendations-reduce-risk-transfusion-transmitted-malaria