NIHR Blood and Transplant Research Unit in Donor Health and Genomics at University of Cambridge





NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of the INTERVAL Newsletter

Data from the INTERVAL trial continues to reveal new insights and it has won an award! We're excited to pass along the latest news from INTERVAL. Thank you for all your help!

INTERVAL has won an award

The paper 'Efficiency and safety of varying the frequency of whole blood donation (INTERVAL): a randomised trial of 45,000 donors' (*Lancet, 2017*) – describing the main trial findings – has been chosen as the Best Publication of the Year as part of the NHS Blood and Transplant Research & Development Awards 2018. Read the paper here:

www.intervalstudy.org.uk/files/2017/09/INTERVAL-Main-Results.pdf



INTERVAL Phase II results

Initial results from the INTERVAL trial (link above) showed that, over a 2-year period, inter-donation intervals for whole blood donation can be safely reduced to meet blood shortages. We extended the trial for a further two years (INTERVAL Phase II) to evaluate the longer-term risks and benefits of varying inter-donation intervals, and to compare routine versus more intensive reminders to help donors keep appointments.

Our analysis showed that more intensive reminders increased whole blood donation rates, suggesting that this approach could potentially be translated into an extra ~75,000 units of blood collected from a donor base of 900,000 (the approximate size of the current donor base in England, UK). If more intensive reminders (e.g., a telephone call when an appointment is missed) could be done at little additional cost, then the gain in the amount of blood collected could be worthwhile, at least for priority blood groups.

The findings have provided policy-makers with two key evidence-based options to meet blood supply needs; that is, the use of frequent reminders to help donors keep appointments and shorter inter-donation intervals than are now standard. This study has also quantified the extent of iron depletion within four years of repeated donation, thus informing safety guidelines.

You can read the full paper here: <u>www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352302619301061?via%3Dihub</u>

Why did we do the INTERVAL trial?

INTERVAL was the first-ever randomised controlled trial, in over 100 years of blood donation practice, to assess the impact of varying the frequency of blood donation on donor health and the blood supply. The E.U. Blood Directive 2002/98/EC sets minimum donation intervals and the maximum number of donations per year in order to minimise risk of iron deficiency in repeat blood donors. However, without definitive data to inform policy, blood donation intervals vary dramatically around the world.



Interval between donations (weeks)

Results from the INTERVAL trial have provided policy-makers with evidence to better manage the supply to the NHS of units of blood, and have quantified the extent of iron depletion following repeated donation, informing safety guidelines for countries that allow more frequent donation than the UK.

Data for figure from Vuk et al. Blood Transfus, 2017

Blood and Transplant Research Unit (BTRU) in Donor Health and Genomics

The INTERVAL, COMPARE and STRIDES studies fit under the umbrella of the BTRU in Donor Health and Genomics. Led by Emanuele Di Angelantonio, Professor of Donor Health, the Unit addresses major questions about the health of blood donors and produces evidence-based strategies to enhance donor safety, whilst ensuring a sustainable blood supply.

Find out more about our research: www.donorhealth-btru.nihr.ac.uk/involved/research-summaries

Attend an event/talk: www.donorhealth-btru.nihr.ac.uk/btru_events

Get involved: www.donorhealth-btru.nihr.ac.uk/involved

Follow us on Twitter: @DonorHealthBTRU

As an INTERVAL participant we will continue to update you on the study. Read about the study's results and the impact they are having on NHS Blood and Transplant: <u>www.donorhealth-btru.nihr.ac.uk/project/interval-study</u> and <u>www.intervalstudy.org.uk/publications</u>. To make sure you receive our emails, please let us know, by emailing: <u>donorhealth@medschl.cam.ac.uk</u>, if you change your contact details.