

**Issue: Haemoglobin Readings Prior to Aerial Evacuation**

*Raised by:* Leslie Gay (HCM, Umbakumba)

*Background:* Query as to why NTAMS in the Top End demand a haemoglobin reading prior to any evacuation, yet this is not a requirement by RFDS in Central Australia. Should there be a consistent practice?

*Discussion:* Requests for pre flight haemoglobin relate to the effect of altitude and atmospheric pressure compromising the body's ability to transport oxygen efficiently.

Discussion has been held with both RFDS (Alice Springs) and NTAMS (Darwin) relating to this topic.

A factor that has historically influenced the requesting of pre flight haemoglobin checks to occur in the Top End but not in Central Australia is the presence of hookworm in the Top End. This parasite exists north of Ti Tree and can be responsible for anaemia in humans (although data is inconclusive).

NTAMS would like to continue the practice of routine pre-retrieval haemoglobin readings.

RFDS recognise the potential value of knowing a haemoglobin reading, but have indicated they are happy that this additional information is not required routinely. Where Remote Health Branch clinical staff identify the clinical importance of a haemoglobin reading, this will be attended as part of the pre-flight workup, and/or RFDS flight nurses may make a request.

It is considered appropriate to adhere to the preferences of the two retrieval operators, rather than establish an NT wide practice within Remote Health Branch.

The value of tabling this topic amongst clinical staff lies in the reminder of considering pre flight haemoglobin readings during retrieval preparation.

*Consultation:* Senior Flight Nurses (RFDS Alice Springs & NTAMS Darwin)

*References:* CARPA STM 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

Community Based Diagnosis and Treatment of Anaemia in NT Aboriginal Children (discussion paper, Jan 2001, Karen Edmond, Barbara Patterson and Andrew White)

Staying healthy in Child Care, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Dec 2005

*Outcome:* In Top End, haemoglobin readings should be taken pre-flight on all retrievals utilising NTAMS.

In Central Australia, haemoglobin readings should be taken pre-flight as required / requested.