



Australian Prescriber



AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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SEARCH ON FOR ANTI-D DONORS

Medical authorities are concerned about shortages of a vital blood product used to prevent haemolytic disease, a condition that is potentially fatal to babies.

The disease occurs when mother and child have incompatible blood types. The mother makes antibodies against the baby's blood cells.

In the 1960s it was discovered that the immune response of a Rhesus negative mother could be prevented by giving Rh D immunoglobulin, known as anti-D, very soon after she had given birth.

Anti-D is derived from the blood of a small number of donors. The latest edition of *Australian Prescriber* reports that supply of anti-D is only just sufficient to meet current demand. Shortages have existed for some time, and at one stage in 1995 the country ran out of supplies. The problem is not restricted to Australia and a worldwide shortage of plasma for anti-D production currently exists.

In Australia, the plasma comes from Rh negative donors who have been immunised by previous exposure or who have been deliberately immunised by being given Rh D positive cells. In order to maintain a donor's levels of anti-D they must be given regular injections of D positive cells, in a process known as boosting.

The problem for Australia is that the current donors are now an elderly group. Finding new donors is difficult, paradoxically because of the success of the program.

The ARCBS is actively looking for donors and would welcome inquiries from Rh negative males and postmenopausal Rh D negative females willing to take part in the program.

Further information

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Australian Prescriber is a national independent review of therapeutic topics, designed to assist health professionals in their duties. The journal provides independent comment - no advertising is accepted. The current issue of *Australian Prescriber* also looks at new drugs for osteoarthritis and the dangers of deathcap mushrooms.

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