

## **Hemochromatosis and Blood Donor Eligibility**

### **Introduction:**

Rock River Valley Blood Center accepts Hereditary Hemochromatosis (HH) patients as volunteer blood donors. The policy is the result of requests by patients with HH to have their blood used for transfusion rather than being discarded. A guidance has been issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allowing blood donation by these patients. The guidance allows donors with HH to donate under the same circumstances as any other volunteer blood donor, except that he/she may be permitted to donate more frequently than every 56 days.

### **Volunteer donors:**

HH patients were not considered volunteer donors as required by the blood center and FDA because of concerns their donation might be motivated by a desire to avoid paying therapeutic phlebotomy fees. Volunteer donors are one of the most important safeguards for the blood supply because they are less likely to be motivated by factors outside of altruism. There is less doubt about the truthfulness of their responses to screening questions which assess high-risk behaviors associated with blood-borne diseases like hepatitis and HIV. If a donor is motivated by an incentive (monetary or otherwise), the safety of the blood supply might be compromised.

Traditionally blood from HH patients had been discarded, although it is actually safe for patient transfusions. The FDA now permits blood centers to use this lifesaving blood for transfusion. Hemochromatosis is hereditary, not an infection, so it cannot be passed on through a transfusion. In addition, HH donors must meet all the donor eligibility and testing requirements that assure blood safety. HH patients who do not want their blood used for transfusion can choose not to participate in this program and will not be charged for having their blood drawn.

### **Other Reasons for Therapeutic Phlebotomy**

As a service to patients with other conditions requiring therapeutic phlebotomy, the Rock River Valley Blood Center will draw their blood as ordered by their physician. There will be no charge for having their blood drawn. All therapeutic phlebotomies require an appointment.

### **Contact the Rock River Valley Blood Center**

We will provide the special form that is required to be filled out by your physician, upon request. Upon receipt of this form, the Special Services team will contact you for an appointment. Contact the Special Services Coordinator/Assistant at the main office (815-965-8751) for any questions.