

Hello, this is Talia Ciarabellini from the Blood Bank with a community comment.

At the blood bank our primary function is to provide safe blood and blood products to local hospitals, but did you know that we provide other valuable medical services to the community?

Many people are unaware that we work closely with St. Joseph hospital and provide a service called TPE or Therapeutic Plasma Exchange. During a TPE the patient's plasma or liquid portion of their blood is separated by a centrifuge and collected. The plasma is replaced with albumin or fresh frozen plasma from the blood bank. This is different from dialysis where the blood is actually filtered and returned to the patient. Some of the disease processes that TPE can treat include neurologic, auto immune, renal and metabolic. The procedures can last from 1 ½ to 4 hours depending on the patient's diagnosis. The blood bank has three specially trained nurses who are on call to provide this lifesaving procedure. Having these nurses available allows critically ill patients to stay in the area for treatment.

Another service that the blood bank is happy to provide to patients is a therapeutic blood draw. Some conditions that require therapeutic blood draws include Polycythemia, which is an increase in the number of circulating red blood cells and total blood volume or Hemochromatosis, a disorder where the body absorbs too much of the iron found in the foods we eat and then stores it in the large organs. Therapeutic blood draws can be performed as often as a couple times a week and require a doctor's order.

If you have ever gone in for a routine surgery such as a knee or hip replacement you may be aware of our autologous blood donation program. An autologous blood donation is when a patient donates blood to be stored for their own surgery. This practice became popular in the 70s and 80s when HIV was at its peak. Over the years with the advances in donor testing, the use of cell savers during surgery and the elimination of paid blood donors this practice has almost disappeared.

The newest patient service provided by the blood bank is autologous serum eye drops. This process starts with the collection of blood just like a routine blood donation. The blood bank carefully coordinates with patient's doctors and pharmacies to create eye drops from a patient's own blood. For some patients with chronic dry eyes this is the only relief that they can get after trying the available pharmaceuticals.

One last service that the blood bank provides is blood typing. For a minimal fee we will type your blood at the blood center lab. If you would like to avoid the fee and donate you can find out your blood type that way!

This has been Talia Ciarabellini from the Northern California Community Blood Bank for Community Comment.