

12/12/14

Hello, this is John Gullam from the Northern California Community Blood Bank with a community comment on KINS.

Apheresis a-p-h-e-r-e-s-i-s is the term used to describe the process of collecting specific blood components either alone or in combination and then returning those components not desired to that donor with that donation. At the blood bank we primarily collect platelets using our apheresis machines. Platelet donation takes a little more time than a whole blood donation but is very beneficial to the recipient. It would take 6 donors giving whole blood donations to make the equivalent of one platelet donation on our apheresis machine. Since we can collect up to 3 donations of apheresis platelets (this would be equivalent to 18 whole blood donations) we are able to help more patients with less exposure to reactions that may occur during transfusions.

Apheresis collections are important because of a shift in laboratory and medical transfusion practices. Patients are now transfused more specifically with only the component of blood that is required to aid in their healing. Some examples of patients that will use platelets are heart surgery, ~~burn~~ organ transplant and bone marrow transplant patients. The platelets that are critical to these patients only last 5 days once collected and must be collected six days a week to keep them available for local hospitals. Whole blood donations are still vital and always will be because remember, there is no substitute for human blood. If you lose your red cells you need a volunteer blood donor to help you replace them.

Have you heard that the blood bank has gone mobile with our apheresis collections? A process that had to be done in the center up until a few months ago, we are now offering platelet collection in Arcata, McKinleyville, Crescent City, Garberville and Fortuna. In early 2014 our midsize bloodmobile was retrofitted to include two apheresis collection machines, more comfortable seating, and a few luxury items like computers equipped with wifi to keep our donors entertained during the one to two hour collection process.

Apheresis donations require an appointment because the number of machines is limited and the kits utilized are specific to that donation. We are now scheduling apheresis mobiles in your town so if you have donated blood before, have approximately two hours to spare one to two times a month and do not use aspirin regularly you may qualify as an apheresis donor. If you have any questions or would like to schedule your appointment please contact the blood bank at 443-8004 and ask for Cathy, our mobile apheresis scheduler.

This has been John Gullam from the Northern California Community Blood Bank with a Community Comment on KINS.