**IBTS imports blood from the NHSBT**

The IBTS announced today (Wednesday) that it is importing a consignment of blood from the NHSBT to address a current shortage in the blood supply. 115 units of Rh Negative blood groups - O negative, A negative and B negative are being collected in Manchester today. The IBTS has not imported blood in bulk since the late 1990s. The IBTS does occasionally import a small number of rare blood units.

“The IBTS is activating our contingency arrangement with the NHSBT in England to supplement blood stocks and avoid raising an alert under the Irish national blood shortage plan, which could have a serious impact on patient care,” said Medical & Scientific Director, Dr Stephen Field.

In addition to importing blood from the NHSBT, the IBTS is asking for public support to maintain the blood supply over the summer months. “Since moving to an appointment based system in March of last year, donors have been incredible in their support throughout the pandemic. However, it has been increasingly difficult to keep the blood supply at the level we need as the summer progresses. The IBTS is not unique in this regard as many blood services around the world are also reporting shortages. Stocks of the main Rh Negative blood groups are under particular pressure, especially O negative which is considered the universal blood group and is always in demand.

“It has been a very tough 15 months for everyone but as hospitals increase their levels of activity, the demand for blood is as great as ever and we are urging donors, especially those with Rh Negative blood groups, to make an appointment to give blood over the summer months. If you receive a text message from us, please respond to the number provided to make an appointment,” he added.

The IBTS continues to adhere to public health guidelines to ensure the safety of its donors. To donate this summer please go to [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie) for the latest information on COVID-19 measures and how to give blood safely through the appointment system. For first time donors please complete the eligibility quiz and register your interest to donate online.

**ENDS**

**Note to editor**

Only 3% of the population are blood donors and approximately 9% of these are O negative. However, as this blood can be transfused to patients of all groups, issues of this blood group to hospitals frequently hits 15% thus requiring more frequent calls on donors of this group.

The IBTS needs to collect 3,000 units of blood every week to maintain the national blood supply.