

Guidelines cut need for blood transfusions

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U.S. medical scientists have created a set of clinical guidelines to help surgeons decrease the need for blood transfusions during cardiac operations.

The team of researchers -- led by Virginia Commonwealth University anesthesiologist Dr. Bruce Spiess and thoracic surgeon Dr. Victor Ferraris of the University of Kentucky -- developed the guidelines.

"Blood must be viewed as a scarce resource that carries risks and benefits," said Spiess. "This is a huge event for medicine. If these guidelines are adopted by a majority of cardiovascular centers in the world, we can decrease the amount of blood transfusions, blood usage and cost and blood shortages would be less frequent and not occur to such a degree.

"There is very strong evidence that patients who receive more blood have more post-operative infection, have more renal failure and have more lung dysfunction," he added.

According to the study, about 15 percent to 20 percent of patients undergoing cardiac procedures use more than 80 percent of the blood products transfused during surgical procedures.

The research appears as a standalone supplement to the May issue of the journal *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*.

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