

Minutes of the 23rd meeting of the Governing Body of National Blood Transfusion Council.

The 23rd meeting of Governing Body of National Blood Transfusion Council was held on 2nd December 2011 at New Delhi under the chairmanship of Secretary(DAC) & DG, NACO as President of NBTC.

The list of members attended the meeting is enclosed at **Annexure - 'A'**.

The President of the Governing Body welcomed all members of the Governing body of NBTC and expressed his concern about non-regularity in convening the meetings of the Governing Body. He suggested that in future at least two meetings of the Governing Body should be convened during a year.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Approval of minutes of the 22nd meeting of the Governing Body of National Blood Transfusion Council held at New Delhi on 4th March 2010;
2. Action Taken Report on proceedings of the 22nd Governing Body of NBTC;
3. Revision of service charges for blood and blood products;
4. Sale of surplus Plasma from NACO supported Blood Component Separation Units to private Plasma Fractionators in India for Plasma Fractionation purposes with a view to use the surplus plasma;
5. Approval of Audit Report of NBTC for year 2009 - 10 and 2010 - 11;
6. Approval of Annual Plan for NBTC for year 2012 - 2013;
7. Introduction of Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) in Blood Banks;
8. Introduction of 4th generation kits in place of 3rd generation kits for infectious markers testing in NACO supported Blood Banks;
9. Introduction of facilities for leuco-reduction of Blood Components (other than filters);
10. Introduction of Advance Blood Serology testing in Blood Banks;
11. Un-interrupted supply of kits for infectious markers, blood bags and anti-sera to Andhra Pradesh State Branch Blood Banks of IRCS and
12. Any other item with permission of the Chair.

The agenda-wise discussions were held and the following decisions were taken in the meeting:

Agenda Item No. 1: Approval of minutes of the 22nd meeting of the Governing Body of National Blood Transfusion Council held at New Delhi on 4th March 2010;

The minutes of the 22nd Governing Body meeting of NBTC held on 4th March 2010 was approved by the Governing Body.

Agenda Item No. 2: Action Taken Report on proceedings of the 22nd Governing Body of NBTC

The Action Taken Report on the minutes of the 22nd meeting of the Governing Body of NBTC was approved.

The decisions taken on various agenda items for approval are as follows:

Agenda Item No. 3: Revision of service charges for blood and blood products;

After a detailed deliberation, it was decided that the issue of Service Charges requires an in-depth study. On this particular issue some of the members opined as follows:

- The cost of running a blood banks greatly depends upon two important cost factors in addition to the others i.e. (i) manpower involved in operating a blood bank and (ii) cost towards running various electrically operated medical equipments in the blood bank. Both the costs projected in the present costing pattern, is projected at a lower side;
- The blood banks working in the voluntary and charitable sectors, which are not operating with assistance from NACP are incurring large expenditures on consumables. Thus the service cost does not seem to be realistic. Hence, there should be a dual costing pattern - for Blood Banks operating with assistance under NACP and Blood Banks operating without any assistance under NACP;

Hence, it was decided that a small expert group will be constituted by NBTC to examine various scenario for costing of blood and blood products. It was concluded that in the public sector, State Governments are also given their own subsidies and times blood is issued free of cost to patients. The Committee will fix the cost at an upper ceiling of cost parameters.

Agenda Item No. 4: Sale of surplus Plasma from NACO supported Blood Component Separation Units to private Plasma Fractionators in India for Plasma Fractionation purposes with a view to use the surplus plasma;

The members opined that surplus plasma is a precious resource and should not be wasted. They suggested that this surplus plasma can be used for fractionation purposes within the country. Some members suggested that the surplus plasma can be given to a Plasma Fractionation Centre and in return can negotiate for various plasma proteins and other derivatives. The proposal to sale this surplus plasma at a cost of Rs.1200/- per litre of plasma needs further assessment of the situation and examination.

Thus, no decision was taken on the issue as well as on the proposal. The same will be put up in the next meeting after a thorough assessment.

Agenda Item No.5: Inclusion of SACS staff in State Blood Transfusion Council.

The Governing Body approved the Audit Report for the year 2009 - 10 and 2010 - 2011 after obtaining due cognisance of available cash balance of NBTC.

Agenda Item No.6: Approval of Annual Plan for NBTC for year 2012 - 2013;

The Annual Action Plan of NBTC for year 2012 - 13 was approved.

Agenda Item No. 7: Introduction of Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) in Blood Banks;

As Dr. C. Shokhey and Dr. P. Balasubramaniam could not attend the meeting, their comments were also taken into consideration during the discussion. The members opined that NAT testing does reduce the window period, but it does not eliminate the same. As it is technologically intensive and requires capacity building and involvement of extra manpower, the value addition of this kind of testing over the existing protocol does not seem to be having any public health rationale at present. Thus, a focus on donor deferral through appropriate counselling will be far more effective for eliminating window period in the existing circumstance.

The representative of DGHS has also clarified that as per the existing standards, NAT testing is not a part of mandatory screening protocol.

Thus, in view of this, it was unanimously agreed that NBTC at present could not give any policy directive for implementation of NAT testing as a national strategy. However, any State/Blood Bank/institution will be free to undertake such tests over and above the prescribed standards as per Drugs & Cosmetics Act.

Agenda Item No. 8: Introduction of 4th generation kits in place of 3rd generation kits for infectious markers testing in NACO supported Blood Banks;

The discussion on this issue concluded with the remark that there is no much value addition of using 4th generation kits instead of the existing 3rd generation kits.

Thus, use of such kits for infectious markers testing could not be taken at this stage.

Agenda Item No. 9: Introduction of facilities for leuco-reduction of Blood Components (other than filters);

After a thorough deliberation, on introduction of leuco-reduction blood components, it was revealed that no policy directives can be issued by NBTC since this would lead to restriction in competition owing to a closed system.

Agenda Item No. 10: Introduction of Advance Blood Serology testing in Blood Banks;

As far as the issue of advanced blood serology in blood banks is concerned, the members opined that since the Blood Banks supported under NACP are restricted for consumable grants, anti-sera is not a part of this support. As such NBTC cannot pass any policy directive in this regard. However with regard to automation, NBTC should take a call on this issue and send an advisory to State Blood Transfusion Councils / State Governments for specific comments of high volume blood banks for automation purposes.

Agenda Item No. 10: Un-interrupted supply of kits for infectious markers, blood bags and anti-sera to Andhra Pradesh State Branch Blood Banks of IRCS;

On this issue, Director (NBTCC) suggested that there is a laid down protocol for assessment of the Blood Banks for enrolment for NACO support and all blood banks in all sectors will be enlisted only after the assessment by State Drug Authority along with an expert nominated by the State Government / State AIDS Control Society.

Agenda Item No. 11: Any other item with permission of the Chair;

On suggestion of one member of the Governing Body, the lackadaisical attitude of the blood banks to follow the directives of the Governing Body of NBTC was seriously viewed. It was decided that the decisions of the Governing Body of NBTC should be followed by all the Blood Banks. The President directed that the Drugs Controller General (India) make appropriate amendment in the Drugs & Cosmetics Act to ensure that such directives are mandatorily and scrupulously adhered to.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair.

