



DENGUE OUTBREAK Platelet kit crunch delaying treatment

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Treatment of seriously ill dengue patients is being affected by an acute shortage of the kit needed to extract platelets from whole blood in a method that requires only a single donor.

When platelet count plummets in patients, physicians need to give platelets through a vein as quickly as possible.

In order to get enough platelets from one donor, health workers use a device known as apheresis machine to draw blood, extract platelets, and return the blood to the donor.

The process requires a single-use imported kit worth around Tk 9,500, said a private hospital employee, requesting not to be named. The whole process costs between Tk 20,000 and Tk 30,000 at private facilities and up to Tk 15,000 at government hospitals.

As health care facilities often suspend the service due to the kit shortage, platelet-rich plasma is isolated in a method that requires whole blood donated by three or four donors to form a transfusable unit. The blood is not given back to the donors in this method.

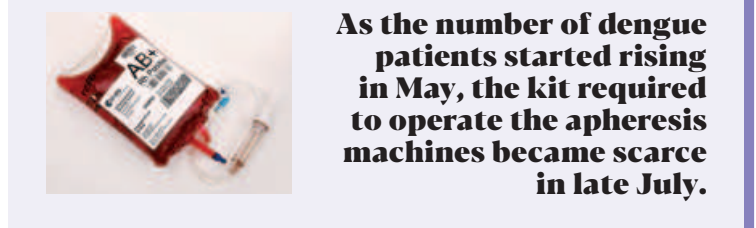
As a result, the patients' families have to look for multiple donors in times of dire need. Besides, the process takes hours to complete.

As the number of dengue patients started rising in May, the kit required to operate the apheresis machines became scarce in late July.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University suspended the platelet extraction service for a week this month.

The scarcity has been more acute at private hospitals.

Green Life Hospital suspended the platelet extraction service last week. The hospital authorities say they had been grappling with kit shortage since the beginning of August.



As the number of dengue patients started rising in May, the kit required to operate the apheresis machines became scarce in late July.

"Initially, we suspended providing the services to outpatients. Now we don't have any kit in stock," said Abdur Rouf, a technologist at the hospital.

Currently, the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases has the service for outpatients.

Prof Rashid E-Mahbub, president of Bangladesh Health Rights Movement, said, "It was easy to figure there would be a crisis of different medical equipment needed for dengue treatment, but the health officials failed to take steps to prevent it. This happened because we do not have a well-organised health system."

The Daily Star contacted physicians and medical technologists from a dozen private hospitals last week, and all of them said they were facing a shortage of the kit.

At LabAid hospital, Head of Blood Transfusion Medicine Syed Mahboob Karim Shamim said the demand for platelets extraction saw an five to six fold rise this month.

He received requests for platelets extraction from government and private hospitals, and between August 1 and 26, the service was given to 200 patients.

Employees of six blood banks at the capital's Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, and Dhaka Medical College Hospital said they were having to turn away people desperately looking for platelets for their loved ones.

They added that the kit importers could be creating an artificial crisis as the demand has gone up.

"This is painful for us too. People break down in tears when we tell them about the suspension of platelet extraction service," said Zahidur Rahman, in charge of Red Crescent Blood Bank.

Referring to the suppliers of the kit, he said, "We cannot trust businesspeople anymore. They always say there is a shortage. But if you pay them extra money, they will arrange kits for you. But as a charity, we can neither pay them extra, nor charge additional fees from the patients."

An official of a supplier of medical equipment said he hopes the crisis would soon be over.

Contacted, Nurul Alam, spokesperson for the Directorate General of Drug Administration, said, "To our knowledge, there is no crisis of platelet [extraction] kits. And we issued import permission on a priority basis to the importers."



Macron may visit Dhaka after G20 summit

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

French President Emmanuel Macron is likely to visit Dhaka after the G20 summit in New Delhi, signalling an enhancement of the Dhaka-Paris relationship that both parties seem eager for.

The summit, in which Bangladesh and France will both participate, will be held from September 9-10.

Multiple diplomatic sources in Dhaka, New Delhi and Paris said the officials concerned in

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Pickups parked along the median barrier on Panthapath-Tejgaon Link Road take up an entire lane near FDC level crossing. Congestion worsens during rush hours because of illegal parking. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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AIR POLLUTION IN BANGLADESH Life expectancy rate cut by 6.8yrs

Says study by US-based research institute;
Bangladesh tops list of most polluted countries

AFP, Washington

Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan are, in order, the top four most polluted countries in terms of annualised, population-weighted averages of fine particulate matter, a study showed yesterday.

It was detected by satellites and defined as particles with a diameter of 2.5 microns or less (PM2.5), according to a research by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC).

Air pollution concentrations are then fed into the AQLI metric, which calculates their impact on life expectancy based on peer-reviewed methods.

Residents of Bangladesh, where the average PM2.5 levels were 74 micrograms per cubic meter, would gain 6.8 years of life if they were brought down to 5 micrograms per cubic meter as per WHO guidelines.

Globally, South Asia is the worst impacted region.

Among other South Asian countries, India's capital Delhi is "most polluted megacity in the world", with an annual average particulate

pollution of 126.5 micrograms per cubic meter.

China, on the other hand, "has had remarkable progress in terms of its war on air pollution", which began in 2014, Christa Hasenkopf, director of air quality programs at EPIC, told AFP.

Its air pollution dropped by 42.3 percent between 2013 and 2021. If the improvements are sustained, the average Chinese citizen will be able to live 2.2 years longer.

According to the study, air pollution is more dangerous to the health of the average person on planet Earth than smoking or consuming alcohol, with the threat worsening in its global epicentre, South Asia, even as China rapidly improves.

Yet the level of funding set aside to confront the challenge is a fraction of the amount earmarked for fighting infectious diseases, the research said.

Its annual Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) report showed that fine particulate air pollution — which comes from vehicle and industrial emissions, wildfires, and more — remains the "greatest external threat to public health".

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Initiate talks with all parties Gonoforum asks govt, places six proposals for fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday expressed doubt about whether the next general election would be free and fair.

"We're worried that the election won't be free and impartial. People must unite and try to ensure a free, fair election," he said while addressing a discussion organised by Gonoforum on the occasion of the party's 30th founding anniversary at Jatiya Press Club.

"My only request is that we all work together for national unity. Together we can achieve our goals," he said.

Due to health issues, Dr Kamal could not continue with his speech, the rest of which was read out by the party's general secretary Mizanur Rahman.

In the written statement, Dr Kamal urged the government to immediately initiate dialogues with all political parties to ensure a free, fair, and participatory upcoming parliamentary election.

"The people are extremely anxious about the next polls as the one-sided 2014 election was held without voters and the 2018 election was held at night," reads the statement.

In the written statement, Dr Kamal outlined six proposals, including forming a non-partisan, election-time government through dialogue with all political parties and a reconstitution of the Election Commission. It also demanded ensuring freedom of speech, press and social media; all parties' freedom to hold rallies and meetings; a level playing field for all parties; withdrawal of "false and harassing" cases against opposition leaders and activists; and arrangements for appointment of domestic and foreign observers.

In reply to a question from journalists after the speech, Dr Kamal said, "These proposals have been made to resolve poll-related conflicts."



Rashid Mia, a farmer, pulls his dinghy across a marsh in Prosonda area of Jhalakathi as he looks for grass suitable to feed his cows. Such wetlands are integral to farming in Barishal region.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Dogs respond better when owners use cute 'baby talk'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Dogs' brains are sensitive to the familiar high-pitched "cute" voice tone that adult humans, especially women, use to talk to babies, according to a new study.



The research, published recently in the journal Communications Biology, found "exciting similarities" between infant and dog brains during the processing of speech with such a high-pitched tone feature.

Humans tend to speak with a specific speech style characterised by exaggerated prosody, or patterns of stress and intonation in a language, when communicating with individuals having limited language competence.

Such speech has previously been found to be very important for the healthy cognitive, social and language development of children, who are also tuned to such a high-pitched voice.

But researchers, including those from the Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary, hoped to assess whether dog brains are also sensitive to this way of communication.