



HEALTH AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

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MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Revised Policy on Donor Screening, Deferral, and Lookback for West Nile Virus (WNV)

The U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued Final Guidance for Industry, *Revised Recommendations for the Assessment of Donor Suitability and Blood Product Safety in Cases of Known or Suspected West Nile Virus Infection* on 1 May 2003 revising blood donor screening, deferrals, and lookback guidelines for WNV. The FDA also recommended use of licensed donor screening tests to detect acute donor WNV infections once such tests are available. The Armed Services Blood Program Office has coordinated and is issuing Blood Program Letter (BPL) 03-07, notifying the Services to implement the revised policy regarding Donor Screening, Deferral and Lookback for WNV and requiring implementation of nucleic acid WNV testing using investigational procedures.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force Blood Programs will implement nucleic acid testing for WNV under investigational procedures, either by performing the test in-house or by contracting with a laboratory performing the testing. The TRICARE Management Activity shall ensure the Defense Blood Standard System (DBSS) is modified to include input of NAT results and testing algorithms.

Nucleic acid WNV testing should be implemented as soon as the investigational WNV test is available for widespread use. All other donor screening, deferral, and lookback requirements in this policy should be implemented by 1 June 2003 or as soon as feasible. Details of this policy should be communicated to appropriate commanders, health care providers, and others involved in its implementation.

The point of contact for this matter is COL G. Michael Fitzpatrick, MS, USA, Director Armed Services Blood Program Office, at DSN 761-8024 or (703) 681-8024, glen.fitzpatrick@otsg.amedd.army.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen P. Embrey".

Ellen P. Embrey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Force Health Protection and Readiness)