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IMPACT ON WHOLE BLOOD DONOR DEFERRAL CRITERIA DURING PRE AND POST COVID PANDEMIC : A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy blood donors are crucial for maintaining safe and adequate blood transfusion services, which are vital for patients undergoing surgeries, trauma care, or managing chronic conditions like anemia and cancer. Understanding the reasons for donor deferral is essential for improving recruitment, retention, and ensuring blood safety.

AIM & OBJECTIVE

- To analyze the deferral patterns of whole blood (WB) donors and comparing the periods before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- By identifying the primary causes of deferrals and any significant shifts due to the pandemic, the study seeks to inform future strategies to optimize donor recruitment and ensure a stable and safe blood supply.

MATERIALS & METHODS

- This retrospective comparative study analyzed WB donor deferral patterns at a tertiary care institute in northern India. Data were collected from donors who were deferred from donating blood during both the pre-COVID and post-COVID periods. The variables studied included the sex of the donor, donor type (voluntary or replacement), type of deferral (temporary or permanent), and reasons for deferral. All data were systematically recorded using a standardized proforma.

RESULTS

- Total Donors: 13,457 during the study period
- Deferred Donors: 2,026 with an overall deferral rate of 15.05%
- Deferral Causes:
  - Pre-COVID Phase:
    1. Deferred Donors: 640
    2. Majority due to temporary causes (87.79%)
    3. Most common cause: Anemia (24.21%), followed by high hemoglobin
  - Post-COVID Phase:
    1. Deferred Donors: 1,386
    2. Similar primary cause: Anemia
- Overall Deferral Classification:
  - Temporary Deferrals: 87.79%, allowing for future donations
  - Permanent Deferrals: 12.21%

CONCLUSION

COVID-related deferral criteria (recent illness, vaccinations, exposure) temporarily affected eligibility but did not significantly alter overall deferral patterns. Anemia remained the primary cause of deferral before and after the pandemic, highlighting its ongoing impact on donor eligibility. The study concludes that while pandemic-related challenges existed, medical deferral criteria remained stable.

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