# BETWEEN THE FLAGS – ADVICE NOTICE

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<th>SUBJECT:</th>
<th>Use of NSW Health Standard Observation Charts for Blood Transfusions</th>
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<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>This advice is issued by the CEC’s BTF Program Team and is endorsed by the BTF Steering Committee. It has been developed in consultation with the CEC Blood Watch Program in response to a request from the BTF Executive Sponsors and Clinical Leads Committee.</td>
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| SITUATION | Like many interventions, the clinical use of blood and blood products is not without risk. Mild to moderate reactions are commonly observed, however reactions can be severe and life threatening, presenting as a significant febrile response with haemodynamic instability, acute respiratory complications, or any pathophysiological presentation of systemic compromise. Patients receiving blood and/or blood products require observation and monitoring to ensure recognition and appropriate response to a transfusion reaction. The Australian & New Zealand Society for Blood Transfusion outlines the minimum requirements for observations in patients receiving fresh blood components (red cells, platelets and plasma) as:
- Baseline – no longer than 30 minutes prior to commencement
- 15 minutes post commencement
- Hourly for remainder of transfusion

The NSW Health Standard Observation Charts are not used for all patients receiving blood and/or blood products, leading to a variation in practice across NSW. Some clinical units use a separate form, or a table format instead of a graph for recording observations, particularly in outpatient or day only settings. One reason given for not using the charts for this patient group is that the temperature graph does not easily show small elevations in temperature (\(<0.5^\circ C)\), that may be an early indication the patient is having a transfusion reaction. |
| BACKGROUND | The Recognition and Management of Patients who are Clinically Deteriorating policy PD2013_049 requires that all observations are to be recorded on a NSW Health Standard Observation Chart (e.g. SAGO/SPOC/SMOC).

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Standard 9.3.1 requires that observation charts are designed using human factor principles and that observations are recorded graphically over time. |
| ASSESSMENT | The principles of early recognition and response to the deteriorating patient are applicable to any patient receiving blood and/or blood products. A transfusion reaction may give rise to changes in the patient’s respiratory, heart rate and blood pressure, as well as temperature.

The practice relating to the recording of observations needs to be consistent across NSW and comply with policy. |
**RECOMMENDATION**

All observations should be recorded on a NSW Health Standard Observation Chart according to the policy directive PD2013_049 Recognition and Management of Patients who are Clinically Deteriorating.

During a transfusion, the temperature can be both plotted and written on the chart to help identify changes in temperature of < 0.5°C (see Figure A).

To increase awareness of any change from baseline, a line can be drawn on the temperature graph identifying the threshold for action and escalation, as based on the baseline observations (see Figure B).

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**ENQUIRES**

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