NECESSITY OF BLOODLESS MEDICINE FOR BLOOD TRANSFUSION AVOIDANCE DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Introduction: Bloodless medicine, initially an advocacy for patients who decline blood transfusion, seems to be needed to resolve the challenges of blood transfusion in a pandemic, in view of its proven efficacy and safety. This paper aims to identify the challenges of blood management in a pandemic and how bloodless medicine could provide a solution.

Methodology: A non-systematic review of literature was carried out to identify the challenges of blood management during Covid-19 pandemic as well as bloodless medicine techniques that could mitigate the challenges.

Results: Issues of blood shortages and blood safety were prominent during Covid-19 pandemic. Cancellation of operation lists occurred due to blood shortages. Covid-19 was also identified as a transfusion transmissible infection. Bloodless medicine techniques are grouped under 4 'pillars': raising the hematocrit, minimizing blood loss, optimizing tissue oxygenation, and supporting patient tolerance of anemia. When applied in a multi-modal and multidisciplinary manner following a protocol, blood transfusion can be totally avoided in a wide variety of patients, with superior outcomes in terms of morbidity and mortality, and lower cost.

Conclusion: Bloodless medicine techniques can resolve issues of allogeneic blood safety and shortages in a pandemic. Clinicians need to consider employing bloodless medicine techniques as a routine for the safety of patients, and this would dove-tail seamlessly into clinical practice during a pandemic. The cost benefit of bloodless medicine is an added advantage.

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Abstract track: Perioperative Blood Conservation Techniques