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Blood storage shortage The situation in April 2010, Thailand

Finding a sufficient blood supply to meet the demand is the important task of the blood bank. In many countries, including Thailand, blood acquisition is based solely on the donation system. Under normal circumstances adequate amounts of blood are usually acquired and maintained by the national regulating units. Here, the author discusses the recent blood supply crisis faced by the Thai national blood bank which occurred in April 2010. In early April 2010, the Thai national blood bank declared a shortage of blood storage in the national blood bank, the stocks of which dropped to less than the maintenance level of 1500 units/day.¹ Several contingency policies were instituted for coping with this crisis.

The use of the mobile blood donation units was activated in several places. However, due to two uncontrolled factors in April 2010, the severe shortage of blood supply can still be observed. First, April is the period of the Thai new year festival (the water festival), which is a very long weekend holiday, with closing of many governmental and non-governmental offices. This leads to a decrease in the number of blood donations. Second, the unstable political situation in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, also affected the blood donation system. Many people felt afraid and did not go out of their homes to donate blood at the blood center near the protest. On the other hand, increased demands for blood and blood products can be expected in this period. The increased rate of accidents during the Thai

new year festival, as well as the numerous cases of injury during the unexpected civil violence in Bangkok in April 2010 also significantly increased the blood requirements. There have been some previous reports on blood supply crises in other countries. The prime example can be seen in a severe crisis such as earthquake.² The present crisis in Thailand can be regarded as a good example of blood shortage in a non natural disaster related episode. Fagerhol et al noted that specific plans should be set in place to manage blood supply in the event of any possible unexpected crisis due to war or a natural disaster in a country.³ They also suggested that cooperation with the military chain command units might be useful, and that key roles and responsibilities for personnel on the civilian side need to be defined.³

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