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November 10, 2014

Dr. Edward Kelley
Department of Service Delivery and Safety
World Health Organization
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

kelleye@who.int

Dear Dr. Kelley:

Re: The World Apheresis Association urges the development of preparedness plans to make specific plasma available when urgently needed

The board of the World Apheresis Association (WAA) would like to express concern about a possible delay in the response of blood collection operators and national authorities regarding the separation and use of plasma obtained from Ebola virus convalescent patients in African countries exposed to the risk of an outbreak or epidemic.

If apheresis plasma collection is an option, preparedness plans must be set up ahead of time because the apheresis procedures require expertise and education. Apheresis plasma collection and the safety measures applied to plasma for direct therapeutic use require that cell separators and their required disposables are locally available.

A reliable power supply is also a requirement so as not to alter the blood components during collection, but also, and foremost, not to harm the blood donor. This is because the procedure involves an extracorporeal circulation with a risk of citrate intoxication if the circuit is interrupted. Additional testing for transfusion transmitted

infections should also be made available within the collection/blood processing centers. Personnel must be trained and knowledgeable in both apheresis procedures and donor hemovigilance.

The WAA considers that the unexpected extent of the current outbreak has overwhelmed all stakeholders and left the delivery of primary care principally to NGOs and so-called “French Doctors” who must be greatly thanked for their invaluable dedication. Meanwhile, with the hope that a disaster will be avoided this time, there is much to fear that other outbreaks will happen: non-preparedness for those situations is not acceptable.

The WAA entreats the World Health Organization to orchestrate a joint effort by all professionals in the field of blood transfusion and apheresis, along with the NGOs and regulatory authorities, in order to meet future requirements regarding collection of convalescent plasma with full respect of all ethical principles. The WAA makes a strong statement that every possible effort must be made to prevent the merchandizing of convalescent blood and use of the current situation to make money or gain unmerited credit and/or scientific reputation. The WAA will offer intellectual and, whenever possible, technical support to think tanks attempting to set up rapid preparedness plans for the very near future.

On behalf of Dr. Paolo Perseghin, President, and the World Apheresis Association Board of Directors,

Olivier Garraud, MD PhD
Secretary-General, World Apheresis Association

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