

When Must Clinicians Obtain a Separate Consent for Use of Blood Products in the Post-Operative Period?

VA policy requires practitioners to obtain signature consent for the use of blood products. When it is expected that a surgical procedure may require the use of blood products, informed consent for the use of blood products should be obtained as part of the informed consent for the surgical procedure. Often, consent is obtained pre-operatively for blood products that may be needed during surgery as well as blood products that may be needed during the immediate post-operative period. The Ethics Center has recently been asked to clarify whether, and if so under what conditions, a new consent for blood products must be obtained following surgical procedures.

When Separate Consent Is Not Needed

In general, consent obtained pre-operatively for blood products to be administered during the post-operative period should be considered valid when:

- (1) blood products are needed as a direct result of the surgical procedure;
- (2) the patient remains significantly compromised by the aftereffects of surgery (e.g., the patient is still recovering from anesthesia or is in considerable pain);
- (3) the potential need for blood products during the post-operative period was anticipated in advance;
- (4) this potential need was specifically explained to the patient; and
- (5) the patient specifically consented to the use of blood products during the post-operative period.

The responsible practitioner should use his or her clinical judgment to determine whether the above conditions apply.

When Separate Consent Is Needed

New consent for blood products is needed during the post-operative period if:

- (1) any of the conditions listed above is not met;
- (2) the consent for the original consent expires;
- (3) the patient revokes the original consent; or,
- (4) there is a significant deviation from the plan of care to which the patient consented.

To help ensure that practitioners and patients better understand that consent obtained for the use of blood products during surgery extends to the post-operative period, *iMedConsent* documents will be updated to specifically indicate this fact.

Notes

1. See VA Handbook 1004.1, [Informed Consent for Clinical Treatments and Procedures](#), Paragraph 4.b.

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Ethics Center at vhaethics@va.gov