1.0 Background

Children with Sickle Cell Disease are at risk of developing post-operative Acute Chest Syndrome. With improvements in intra-operative monitoring and more awareness of the conditions that induce red cell sickling (hypoxia, hypothermia, acidosis, and dehydration), dramatic reductions in perioperative complications have occurred.

It has been shown that the correction of anemia and reduction in the percentage of haemoglobin S will prevent intra-operative and post-operative morbidity and mortality in sickle cell patients. Historically, uncertainty has existed as to the benefits of simple pre-operative transfusion, given the concern of increased blood viscosity. While a partial exchange transfusion would allow for a lowering of hemoglobin S without an increase in hematocrit, a multicenter randomized trial comparing simple and exchange transfusion to prevent peri-operative complications in patients with Sickle Cell Anemia favored simple transfusions for pre-operative management.

In 2011, the Transfusion Alternatives Preoperatively in Sickle Cell (TAPS) study, a multicenter randomized study of transfusion vs. no transfusion pre-operatively, revealed more serious complications amongst patients who had not been transfused compared with those who received a transfusion. The significance of the results prompted premature closure of the trial in order to protect patient safety.

In weighing the risks and benefits of pre-operative transfusion, the extent of the operative procedure, including post-operative dysfunction and pain, must be assessed. A retrospective review by Griffin and Buchanan showed that for the majority of minor elective procedures (hernia repair, circumcision, tympanostomy tube placement, strabismus surgery, and dental rehabilitation) in sickle cell patients, pre-operative transfusions are unnecessary, as these patients usually have uncomplicated courses. Surgeries that place patients with Sickle Cell Disease at higher risk (50%) of developing post-operative complications include thoracotomy, laparotomy, and tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy (T/A). Patients undergoing these and other procedures, characterized by longer intra-operative duration and by compromised chest wall and pulmonary mechanics, may benefit from pre-operative transfusion.

In conclusion, patients who are seriously ill, hematologically compromised (Hgb 15g/L< baseline), or undergoing major surgeries (e.g. thoracotomy, laparotomy), should receive a pre-operative simple blood transfusion. Patients with a history of pulmonary disease or frequent recurrent painful crises requiring hospitalization appear to be at a higher risk of complications, and hence should also be transfused. Patients who are in their usual state of health, at baseline Hgb, and well-established on Hydroxyurea likely do not need a pre-operative transfusion for relatively simple surgeries (cholecystectomy, splenectomy). The decision regarding pre-operative transfusion should be based on the unique past history and current medical condition of the individual patient.
2.0 Pathway

**Sickle Cell Peri-operative Management Care Pathway**

**GOALS**
- Admit all patients 1 day prior to surgery.
- Assess for risk factors and risk of potential complications.
- Patients are admitted of pre-op bath. Wipes to be used upon arrival. Refer to procedure document.

**PRE-OPERATIVE**
- Complete thorough examination.
- Ensure child does not have any acute illness.
- Postpone procedure if child is not healthy.
- Consider transfusion for the following children:
  - undergoing major procedure, i.e., thoracostomy, laparotomy, TIA;
  - if and surgery cannot be postponed;
  - significant history of pulmonary disease, stroke, etc. and/or:
  - children with hemoglobin 15 g/dL below baseline.
  - Less than 130 g/dL, below baseline for urgent surgery.

**POST-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT**
- In the recovery ward, assess thoroughly before transferring to inpatient unit.
- Request hematology and anesthesia consults.
- Complete pre-operative checklist:
  - Ensure blood group and red cell phenotype are on patient’s chart.
  - If blood is needed, blood bank is pre-intravenous.
  - Ensure there is a current sample for type and screen (indicated Sickle Cell Disease as diagnosis).
  - Ensure that blood required and Sickle Cell disease patients are on laboratory list.
  - If blood is pre-intravenous, ensure the requisition for the delivering blood products indicated Sickle Cell disease in addition to Thalassemia.

**PERI-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT**
- Plan general anesthesia carefully for elective procedures in collaboration with Sickle Cell Team.
- Ensure stable and previous episodes of Acute Chest Syndrome as these can lead to post-op complications.
- Discuss any issues with Hematology fellow staff.

**POST-OPERATIVE**
- Review NPO requirement prior to surgery.
- IV and PO fluids at maintenance.
- Maintain NPO status.
- When NPO administer IV fluids at maintenance.
- Refer to Fluid and Electrolyte Guidelines.
- Complete serum electrolytes (Na⁺, K⁺, glucose, urea, creatinine) prior to IV fluid administration.

**PRINTABLE VERSION**

3.0 References


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**Attachments:**

[Revision History.docx](#)

[SCD Periop 2021 FINAL.pdf](#)