

Suzy is a Core Laboratory MLT who is working alone when she is notified that the emergency department is receiving two trauma patients involved in an accident. At the same time, an Oncologist requests 2 units of A positive red cells for a patient whose hemoglobin has dropped. The 2 units will bring the patient's hemoglobin back to 100 g/L.

The Oncologist insists their patient receives the blood now. Currently, there are 6 A positive red cell units in stock. The OR has requested 4 units for a trauma patient who is undergoing surgery, and if Suzy issues 2 units for the oncology patient, there will be no units left. Suzy knows Canadian Blood Services' (CBS) inventory is low and they cannot supply any blood until the following afternoon, and nearby hospitals are also short of blood.

Suzy refers the Oncologist to the Pathologist-on-call for authorization to issue the units, but the Pathologist has not returned the page. The Oncologist is becoming increasingly irate and demands the 2 units for their patient.

As Suzy is on the phone, specimens arrive from Emergency for troponin, blood gases, electrolytes, and CBC analysis.

Suzy must decide how to handle the urgent requests for red cells and the number of other specimens that require immediate testing. Due to workload, patient care may be at risk and more staffing is required to perform these tasks in a timely manner.

Decision-making framework

1



Assess the situation

Gather and assess all available and relevant facts

2



Plan a course of action

Document the options, and the benefits and consequences of pursuing/not pursuing each option

3



Implement the plan

Carry out the plan and document the outcome

4



Evaluate the outcome

Evaluate the results of any actions

5



Share lessons learned

Practice interprofessional collaboration and share lessons learned

Scenario Breakdown

Assess the situation

There is a blood shortage with two cases requesting red cells. One for a trauma patient and the other an oncology patient, and the lab can only support one case due to supply issues. The workload is growing with the delivery of new specimens.

Plan your course of action

Suzy can tell the physicians about the blood shortage and request approval before issuing them. Suzy can call the lab manager to have more staff come in for the current shift. Suzy can try to manage alone but this may cause delays.

Implement the plan

Suzy informed the Pathologist about the blood supply and requested they follow-up with the requesting physicians. If the lab manager is unavailable, Suzy will call a senior MLT for help. Suzy reviews the samples and prioritizes them based on urgency until assistance arrives.

Evaluate the outcome

The Pathologist determined the trauma case was priority for the red cells. The lab manager authorized another MLT to work and they arrived in 2 hours. All testing was completed within required turnaround times.

Share your lessons learned

Suzy communicated the situation to her colleagues. CBS was contacted to discuss the urgency of the two cases. The physicians were notified when more supply was received. Suzy presented this case at the next laboratory meeting.



CMLTO resources to consider:

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Standards of Practice](#)
- [Collaboration Guidelines](#)
- [Guidelines for Ethical Decision-Making](#)