

Tulane pathologist teaches future physicians about transfusion medicine

Carolyn Scofield
scofield@tulane.edu
(504) 881-4542

In the 25 years Dr. Tim Peterson has been working with blood banks, he's never seen the supply as low as it is right now. The ongoing pandemic slowed donations to a trickle, but the need for whole blood and blood components never eased. Dr. Peterson manages 80% of the blood supply in the state. In addition to being an assistant professor of anatomic and clinical pathology at Tulane University School of Medicine he is also the medical director at The Blood Center, which serves the greater New Orleans area and Shreveport.

"At Tulane alone, we handle hundreds of sickle cell transplants and other procedures each year, requiring a large supply of blood and blood parts," said Peterson. "We've had to put many elective surgeries on hold because of the current shortage."

Compounding the shortage caused by the pandemic, Peterson says the holiday season also puts a dent in the number of people donating. That season runs from Thanksgiving through Mardi Gras in Southeast Louisiana, and with Fat Tuesday falling on March 1 this year the slowdown could extend for several more months. The Blood Center is currently running at a half-day to one day supply of available blood, when administrators would like to have a minimum of a three to five-day supply available.

"With the tenuous blood supply we have during the holidays, one or two events such as an organ transplant or a major trauma event can deplete all available blood," said Peterson. "That's why we rely on the generosity of donors to maintain an adequate supply."

January is National Blood Donor Month and Tulane University School of Medicine is hosting a blood drive. Look for the Bloodmobile parked outside the Hutchinson Building both **January 31, 2022 and February 1, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** [Register for a Monday appointment here.](#) [Register for a Tuesday appointment here.](#)

The U.S Food and Drug Administration regulates all blood centers and requires screening for potential donors. The FDA updated its guidelines regarding donor eligibility in April of 2020. [Click here to read more about the changes.](#)