

Media Release

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New arrangements to cater for shortages in domestic IVIg supply

The National Blood Authority (NBA) today announced the establishment of a Standing Offer arrangement that will improve the security of Australia's blood product supply by providing a contingent supply of overseas-sourced Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIg) to address future supply shortages.

The NBA was established on 1 July 2003 to improve the management of the blood banking and plasma product sector at a national level.

IVIg, produced from human plasma, is purchased by governments and provided to hospitals under the National Blood Agreement for a limited range of haematological, neurological and immunological conditions.

Under the Standing Offer, two separate overseas-sourced IVIg products will be available – Octagam, produced by Octapharma AG and recently approved in Australia, and Sandoglobulin NF, a product produced by ZLB Behring that has been supplied in Australia for a number of years. Sandoglobulin NF is distributed by CSL Limited's Bioplasma Division.

Both products comply with the stringent safety, quality, and efficacy standards required in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and are on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

'IVIg usage is increasing internationally in all developed countries, including Australia, as more people are treated with the product,' said Dr Alison Turner, General Manager and CEO of the NBA. 'While our blood supply is largely self-sufficient, short term demand changes for IVIg cannot always be met by current arrangements.'

'By having alternative sources of IVIg available, Australia will be much better placed to manage supply risks in the future', she said.

Dr Turner said it was important that the imported IVIg already purchased by Governments under previous arrangements was used before product is ordered under the new arrangements.

She also emphasised that any decision to purchase products under the National Blood Agreement from the contingent supply would be made by all governments through the processes established under the new blood arrangements.

Previously, States and Territories have had the option of purchasing additional IVIg from overseas on an ad-hoc basis to meet shortages in domestic supply. The Standing Offer guarantees that States and Territories experiencing shortages will have access to alternative sources of IVIg to manage domestic shortfalls.

'The prices obtained by the NBA also mean that States and Territories may save up to 35% on the prices they have previously paid for imported IVIg in the past' said Dr Turner.

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