

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 2nd JULY 2019**

Question

Will the Minister advise whether there are circumstances in which the Hospital is aware of patients' blood type but does not inform the patients in question of their blood type; and, if so, will he state the reasons why patients are not so informed in such cases?

Answer

A patient's blood group is not one of the standard tests that a doctor would request from the hospital laboratories on behalf of a patient. The test is only performed under specific circumstances:

1. Clinical demand (i.e. the patient is likely to need a blood transfusion)
2. The person is a blood donor

Knowing their blood group does not directly affect a person's health. So even if the person's blood group has been determined, there is no clinical benefit to sharing the information with the patient. People who regularly donate blood or who regularly receive transfusions will generally know their blood group, but there is no clinical requirement for them to know it.

There is no reason to withhold somebody's blood group from them, but it has no relevance outside of the clinical setting, so it wouldn't routinely be shared with people.

When somebody donates blood or receives a transfusion, regardless of how many times it has been checked before, a fresh determination of the person's blood group is always made using a fresh sample of their blood. This is a safety measure to avoid incompatible transfusions. Providing compatible blood for someone, even in an emergency, never relies on them knowing their own blood group or having it written down somewhere. The hospital team will always follow evidence-based best practice guidelines to ensure that blood transfusions are safe.

A very small number of people with specific special blood transfusion requirements may be given a card to carry describing those special requirements. This is to save time in an emergency by alerting healthcare professionals as early as possible to the special requirements. These special requirements generally do not relate so much to actual blood groups, though occasionally they may, but to things such as bone marrow transplant recipients requiring blood that's been tested for additional viral contaminants because of their impaired immunity, or patients who have developed atypical blood group antibodies from previous pregnancies and therefore need additional testing to find them compatible blood.