

Overview of the Blood Donation in Acute Post-Tsunami in Thailand

Viroj Wiwanitkit, MD

Department of Laboratory Medicine, Faculty
of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok, Thailand

Correspondence:

Viroj Wiwanitkit, MD
Department of Laboratory Medicine
Chulalongkorn University
Bangkok, Thailand 10330
E-mail: wviroj@yahoo.com

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Dear Editor:

Tsunamis are one of the most potentially serious forms of catastrophes. Although much is known about the recorded history of tsunamis for many areas of the world, a tsunami in Southeast Asia has never been recorded. During the morning of 26 December 2004, a large earthquake occurred in the Indian Ocean off the western coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. Subsequently, a giant sea wave, resulting from large-scale seafloor displacements associated with major submarine slides, attacked parts of many countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India. Approximately one million people, living in several countries, were affected by the tsunami. As of 07 January 2005, there were 5,291 deaths and 8,457 injuries. In addition, about 4,000 still are missing.¹ The disaster area in Thailand covers six provinces including Phuket, Pangna, and Krabi, and several world-famous sea resorts, such as Phi Phi Island.

At first, there was a large demand for blood and blood products for the victims. The blood requirement reached its peak during the first three days after the event, and a "call for donation" was broadcast. As a response, thousands of people in Thailand donated. Following the good Thai tradition of helping the victim during disaster, thousands of units of blood were collected within a few days. According to statistics from the Thai National Blood Bank, the blood donation provided more than 3,000 units/day during the first week following the Tsunami.² However, there still were some problems in finding specific blood groups, especially Rh negative. Foreigners contributed a large proportion of the Rh-negative blood. Luckily, after broadcasting this problem, additional blood donations from Thai with specific blood groups and foreigners in Thailand helped to relieve this problem. In summary, between 27 December 2004 and 03 January 2005, 20,682 units were donated at the national blood centers and 15,510 units were donated at mobile facilities (1,409 units from foreigners and 332 units total of Rh-negative blood).³ All blood donated was sent to the disaster area and used to support the requirements of the casualties.

References

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