



## **Highlight Report – December 2023**

- The British Blood Transfusion Society (BBTS) Transfusion Practitioners (TP) Special Interest Group (SIG) would like to begin providing meeting highlight reports to all TPs and individuals in equivalent roles.
- The BBTS TP SIG have recently appointed a new Chair (Dr Karen Mead, Specialist Transfusion Practitioner from North Bristol NHS Trust) and Deputy Chair (Pedro Valle Vallines, Lead Transfusion Practitioner from Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust).
- Meetings are held four times a year and membership consists of NHS Blood and Transplant Patient Blood Management Practitioners, in addition to TPs from all Regional Transfusion Committees in England plus representation from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Highlight reports from the TP SIG will be delivered via these group members to their respective regions.
- BBTS TP SIG membership has increased this year and an updated map of the UK with details of local representatives will be circulated with the next report.
- The departing Chair, Aine O’Kane, published an excellent article in the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition (Sept 2023) of Bloodlines detailing the evolution of the BBTS TP group. This recommended read is attached for interest.
- The annual BBTS conference was held in Harrogate on September 12-14<sup>th</sup> 2023 and the TP session was well received, but overall TP attendance appeared to be low.

### **How can you become involved?**

**Please complete our questionnaire:** <https://forms.office.com/e/nTma7jAU3d>

- We are seeking feedback from those who weren’t present at the BBTS conference to identify any barriers that may have prevented attendance or any thoughts regarding how TP attendance could be increased at future conferences.
- We are collating ideas for topics and areas of interest to be covered in the TP session at the forthcoming BBTS Conference 2024.
- If you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the above, please pass them on to your local BBTS TP SIG representative or email [karen.mead@nbt.nhs.uk](mailto:karen.mead@nbt.nhs.uk)



# THE BRITISH BLOOD TRANSFUSION SOCIETY TRANSFUSION PRACTITIONER (BBTS TP) GROUP THE PAST, THE MIDDLE AND BY NO MEANS THE END

Aine O'Kane

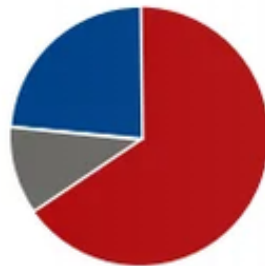
Northern Ireland Regional Haemovigilance Coordinator  
Outgoing Chair of the BBTS TP group

The Specialist Practitioners of Transfusion (SPOT) forum was the first collaborative group that was set up in 1999 for the newly established Transfusion Practitioner (TP) role. This forum started with 10 TPs and was to help the newly established TP role implement the 1998 Better Blood Transfusion (BBT) Health Service Circular. The rapidly expanding membership from all parts of the UK paid £15 to join and an annual membership fee of £10 for which members got a SPOT notebook and the forum had funds to host SPOT meetings and help organise annual SPOT conferences.



Figure 1: The SPOT members notebook

However, with evolution of TPs in each of the UK countries, it was generally felt that regional TP groups, regional Transfusion Committees, and the England Transfusion Liaison Nurse network (led by Catherine Howell) provided the support, education, direction and role development that the SPOT Forum originally did. The main thing that the SPOT Forum provided for members was the discussion forum. In June 2011, at a national SPOT forum meeting, attended by over 100 TP's, the



Is BBTS the correct forum for the national TP group?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

future of the SPOT forum was discussed. Andrea Head (NHSBT Transfusion Liaison Nurse, now known as Andrea Head, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHSBT) presented an overview of BBTS and a history of the SPOT forum – culminating in the question 'Is BBTS the correct forum for the national TP group?'

Following this presentation, delegates were invited to complete a questionnaire, which included TPs opinion of BBTS as a forum platform. 86 questionnaires were completed, with 70 replying to the forum question. The decision to move the SPOT forum to the BBTS TP group was made.

The BBTS Hospital Transfusion Special Interest Group (HoT SIG), chaired by Megan Rowley, Consultant Haematologist SNBTS, with secretary Louise Sherliker recognised the need for the TPs to have

their own specific group rather than join their HoT SIG.

In January 2012, the BBTS TP group held their inaugural meeting, chaired by Claire Atterbury, a TP at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Kings Lynn NHS Foundation Trust with Andrea Harris as secretary. One of the first priorities of the group was to organise a National TP Conference which was held Tuesday 26th June 2012 at Austin Court in Birmingham, using funds carried over from the SPOT forum.

The first newsletter produced by the group showed the membership, covering all the parts of the United Kingdom. See figure 2.

Figure 2: First BBTS TP group newsletter September 2012



The groups' membership were TPs representatives for their region. The main aim of the group was to have a reference point for discussions and queries to bring to and from their own regional TP groups. The group was tasked with deciding and arranging the TP session at the BBTS



## Transfusion Practitioners Group British Blood Transfusion Society

annual conference and also populating a specific BBTS TP section on the BBTS website. The membership changed naturally with retirements and career changes, with Andrea stepping down as secretary in October 2012 being replaced by Alister Jones, Wales. Claire stepped down as chair in 2017, with her position being taken up by myself, then as Aine McCartney (Aine O'Kane since 2019) who had joined as the Northern Ireland TP representative in 2015.

**The group now feel the UK TPs can help make a difference, have a stronger voice and are recognised as the experts they are**

Members met 3 times a year via the BBTS teleconferencing facilities and shared concerns, achievements, ideas, resources and implications for TPs from transfusion related national directives, guidelines and Health Circulars – and disseminating outcomes of the meeting discussions with their regional colleagues. The BBTS conference TP sessions were organised and chaired each year by the group

with the  
Chair and



Secretary being  
members of the BBTS

Annual Conference Committee. Posters were prepared and presented by the group on common themes and collective responses to national transfusion changes– e.g. "TACO – where do we go from here" in 2017,



"Transfusion Practice- a litmus test for patient safety" 2018 and "The Pros and Cons of checklists".

A logo depicting a teepee was designed by the group and used in conjunction with the BBTS logo for any of the group correspondence and publications.

The group also produced some newsletters – updating the TP community with the group's activities and membership changes.

With the development of England's TP regional groups and the follow-on establishment of the National TP Network (NTPN) – it was realised that the group needed at least 2 TPs from each of the different English TP regional groups, the other UK countries and also 2 Patient Blood Manager members.

Microsoft (MS) Teams meetings replaced the teleconferences, so attendance numbers were no longer limited.

The group found great benefit from distributing queries, requesting opinion, information and sharing resources to their UK regional groups so it was agreed that a forum accessible to all UK TPs would be worth exploring. Initial attempts at setting this up in MS Teams were unsuccessful primarily due to GDPR and cross-country access so in 2022, in collaboration and with help from BBTS and their IT support, the BBTS

TP forum was launched at the BBTS annual symposium. Access was open only to TPs from the UK countries, with registration requiring confirmation from the BBTS TP group members. The site contains categories reflecting the main TP

discussion subjects.

With the increased membership and my planned retirement, the chair position was accepted by Karen Mead, Specialist TP in North Bristol NHS Trust and Pedro Valle Vallines, TP in Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust took over the secretary/Co-chair position from Alister Jones between June and September 2023.

Pedro's first task was to redesign the BBTS TP logo, which was approved by the team and BBTS.

The future of the group looks very exciting and promising, with the current membership being passionate about all things TP, a desire to develop the role and to have the collaborative UK TP voice that is now recognised and respected. The TP group is approached for assistance in relevant guidelines development and review, establishing new UK transfusion working groups and for collective advice. The group now feel the UK TPs can help make a difference, have a stronger voice and are recognised as the experts they are particularly in what is happening at the transfusion cold face.

### A personal note

My term as Chair of the BBTS TP group may seem unnaturally long (2018 to 2023) but this is mainly due members enjoying being members and happy that Alister and I kept the momentum going. Discussions about chair replacement invariably included that I was happy to keep the position as it has been so enjoyable and I felt it gave so much back. The meetings were like having a chat with a group of friends, getting excited when these friends spoke your language and had so much shared opinion – and even better, when they had a solution or advice to some of our Northern Ireland transfusion struggles. Going forwards, the group is in great hands with Karen and Pedro, the current membership and the support of BBTS and I have no doubt will be of valuable help with the constantly developing UK TPs

**Acknowledgments** Ant Jackson, TP, Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust, Andrea Head, Deputy Chief Nurse-Blood Supply, NHSBT, Louise Sherliker, Programme Director- Transfusion 2024, NHSBT