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## **Advances in Transfusion Safety - 2001**

Editors: F. Brown, R. Seitz R

This symposium highlighted the principle that blood transfusion is an entire process and not a single product, requiring haemovigilance and quality assurance from 'vein' to 'vein'. The prevention of contaminated blood and blood products was a major focus. Today's blood services provide remarkably safe therapeutic products that are virtually devoid of transmissible enveloped viruses.

However, the risk of bacterial infection, especially in platelet concentrates, is probably underrated and may warrant routine sterility testing or universal pathogen inactivation without incurring the loss of the therapeutic functions of blood products. The unknown risk of prion transmission requires precautionary measures, including leukocyte depletion that may otherwise be beneficial in some patients. The methods for universal pathogen inactivation continue to evolve with some of them due to be licensed for use in the treatment of blood products. Stem cell transplantation portends a new chapter in haemotherapy. However, the question that no one has seriously addressed is the threshold of benefits commensurate with escalating costs that could lead to the unavailability of blood transfusion as an affordable therapy.

This publication provides state-of-the-art reviews of hot topics to transfusionists, haematologists, virologists, and scientists in plasma industry and regulatory authorities, and illustrates how the International Association for Biologicals continues to serve contemporary issues in science and society.

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