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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blood on Board: Henderson County EMS increases capabilities with blood transfusions

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On Monday, August 29, 2022, Henderson County Emergency Medical Services (HCEMS), in collaboration with Pardee UNC Health Care, launched a new program that provides EMS with the capability to administer a blood transfusion when caring for critically sick and injured patients who are in shock from blood loss. HCEMS is one of a few EMS agencies in North Carolina that have begun offering this life-saving treatment to patients.

The program adds another layer of care available to the citizens of Henderson County. A blood transfusion allows paramedics to administer life-saving measures that were previously not available before a patient arrives at the hospital. On the very first day of the program, HCEMS administered the blood to a significantly injured patient while en route to the Trauma Center in Asheville.

“HCEMS transports to a trauma center can take 30 minutes or more, so this capability increases the chances of saving lives,” EMS Manager Mike Barnett said. “Clearly there is a need considering EMS administered a transfusion on the very first day of implementation.”

Pardee UNC Health Care, working in conjunction with The Blood Connection, has developed a program with HCEMS that enables them to bring this program to fruition. Pardee provides blood from its blood bank to HCEMS and monitors conditions to ensure the timely use of each pack. If the blood is not used, Pardee will accept the pack and get it back into circulation, eliminating any waste.

“We are incredibly honored to partner with Henderson County EMS and The Blood Connection to bring this service to Henderson County,” said Dr. Greg McCarty, chief medical officer for Pardee UNC Health Care. “Maintaining the highest levels of stewardship of this incredibly valuable – and often scarce – resource is of the utmost importance to our clinical team.”



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HCEMS received approval from the NC Office of EMS to implement this new blood administration protocol and all HCEMS Paramedics have received specialized training. HCEMS was able to fund this initiative thanks to the Henderson County Board of Commissioners.

HCEMS Supervisors have specialized refrigeration and blood administration equipment on the EMS Quick Response Vehicles that will bring blood to ambulances providing medical care to high acuity patients. HCEMS will be carrying Packed Red Blood Cells that are O-negative, so they can be used universally with any patient. “We’re looking forward to providing this level of care for our community, and grateful for the partnerships that are making this a reality,” Barnett said.

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