Preserving rare blood types for a rainy day

Extending shelf life important, as only 1.5 per cent of donors in 2016 had negative blood types

Poon Chian Hui

Every drop of blood is precious, but they are not all equal. Some blood types can be hard to come by. For every 1,000 people who give blood in Singapore, only 1 in 50 carries the 4 negative blood types (0 per cent). In general, donors with negative blood types will be tested quarterly, only 1 in 50 will be of the usual positive pat type.

To keep some of these for a rainy day, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) needs to stock enough blood types, including the rarest type at 0.07 per cent.

This year, the red, red sea of blood can be extended from the usual 48 days to 12 years, and the Sally Lam, laboratory director of blood supply and transplants, who headers research, explained that platelets are kept at 20 deg C in large lavatories with trays that gently rock back and forth, for up to five days. Ms Lam explained that platelets need to be kept refrigerated as the enzyme that would change it, would be destroyed.

Plasma is quick frozen and nothing will go to waste.

Questions you may have about blood... answered

What does donating blood do to your body?

As the universal recipient, you can receive red blood cells of any blood group. However, in more than 90 per cent of the cases, the blood groups are AB positive or O negative.

What happens if your donated blood is wasted?

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