How is red blood cell (RBC) transfusion used to manage anemia in myelofibrosis (MF) patients?

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Anemia is a common occurrence in MF patients. An analysis of MF patients presenting to the Mayo Clinic revealed that nearly 40% of these individuals have significant anemia, defined as hemoglobin (Hb) <10 g/dL.[1] Almost one-fourth of MF patients initiate RBC transfusion at diagnosis, typically on a biweekly schedule.[2] These individuals are referred to as 'transfusion dependent.' Rates of anemia typically increase over time. At one year post-diagnosis, two-thirds of MF patients are anemic and 45% are transfusion dependent, attesting to the progressive nature of this disease.[2,3]

The threshold for transfusion is typically about Hb <8 g/dL. However, the era of COVID-19 has seen a reduction in the blood supply and a reluctance to unnecessarily expose patients to potential infection, so many experts have decreased the threshold to <7 g/dL. Interestingly, this new threshold may be adopted into standard practice, as studies show that patients can maintain a good quality of life with lower Hb levels than previously assumed.[4]

For more information on the treatment of MF-associated anemia, please view the full newsletter by clicking here.

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References:

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