

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**New guidelines recommend most effective treatment for  
Immune Thrombocytopenia**

**Monday, January 30, 2012 (Hamilton, Ontario)** – Recently updated guidelines for a common blood disorder includes new recommendations on its most effective treatment in *Blood: Journal of the American Society of Hematology*.

Immune Thrombocytopenia Purpura (ITP) occurs when there are a decreased number of blood platelets, causing easy bruising and/or excessive bleeding. There are many mild cases, but the danger occurs when levels fall dramatically, leading to a risk of bleeding to death. Standard treatments include: Chemotherapy-type drugs such as Rituximab; Prednisone which is used to treat anti-inflammatory diseases; and a splenectomy, a procedure which completely removes the spleen. The newly updated guidelines have recommended splenectomy as the only treatment seen to permanently reduce symptoms of ITP in the majority of affected adults.

“These guidelines pose the question: If you had ITP and Prednisone isn’t working for you, what’s the next step?” says Dr. Mark Crowther, Vice President of Research at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton, and co-author of the publication. “The recommendation for splenectomy as the favored method for treatment may appear controversial, but our evidence-based approach has singled this treatment out as the best in terms of efficacy, safety, and cost-effectiveness. Standard treatments for ITP can be toxic, and we still have not seen what long-term effects the use of drugs may have on the ITP sufferer.”

Guidelines were first published in 1996 by the American Society of Hematology to assist clinicians in the management of ITP. Since that time there have been many changes in the management of the disorder, mandating a new update to the guidelines. This publication brought together an international group of clinicians from St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton, Ontario; Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas; Worcestershire Royal Hospital in Worcester, United Kingdom; the Children’s Hospital in Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

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