

Discovering Convalescent Therapy as an Alternative to Covid-19 Treatment

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Blood plasma therapy or convalescent treatment is one of the current alternative therapies in treating positive patients with Covid-19 in several countries.

Specialist Internal Medicine Specialist (Intern Pulmonologist) FKKMK UGM, dr. Sumardi, Sp.PD, KP., FINASIM., said that the medical health team had used the convalescent plasma treatment for so long as a method of treating infectious diseases. For example, during the Spanish flu pandemic in the 1900s. Besides, also the treatment of diphtheria, bird flu, swine flu, ebola, SARS, and MERS.

In the treatment of Covid-19 patients, the blood plasma is obtained from a positive Covid-19 patient who has recovered—blood plasma containing these antibodies transfused into Covid-19 patients who are still sick.

"So, the patients who are still in a sick condition will have given a blood plasma containing antibodies from cured patients," he explained on Wednesday (1/7).



However, convalescent plasma treatment still has limited implementation to some health clinics in some countries, including Indonesia. The success of this therapy is also still limited to a small number of patients.

He gave an example at the hospital in Shenzhen, China. In plasma convalescent treatment performed in 5 Covid-19 patients with respiratory aids/ventilators, it was reported to be able to accelerate the healing of 1 patient. While three others showed a relatively slow healing process and one person died.

Sumardi explained that medical expert needs to fulfil some special conditions to carry out a convection transfusion, in addition to the general requirements for blood transfusion. One of the special requirements is that the donor is a positive patient of Covid-19 who has cured of Covid-19. Next, donors must have sufficient levels of antibodies to Covid-19.

"Plasma is taken about 400 millimetres using the plasmapheresis method, which takes plasma from red blood cells only. Blood plasma is given twice a day in Covid-19 patients," he explained.

Sumardi said that taking Plasma is better undergone on donors on specific people. It must come from Covid-19 patients who have already cured. Also, it needs to be male sex because they do not have HLA antigens. After all, HLA antigens can cause reactions or problems for donor recipients.

Sumardi added that not all Covid-19 patients could get convalescent plasma treatment. Only patients with severe symptoms or critical conditions can get this kind of treatment.

"It is only given to patients with severe symptoms to help speed healing, not for prevention. However, this convalescent plasma therapy becomes an alternative treatment until we found the vaccine," he concluded.

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