

All things medical

## Falsely accused of anemia

Anemia (without blood) is actually less than a normal amount of blood. The individual commonly has fatigue and pale skin. If the blood loss is acute (sudden), they also have rapid heart action and shortness of breath. The evaluation of red blood count, hemoglobin and hematocrit is the main way of diagnosing and monitoring an anemia. The above tests are simple and were thought to be easily reproducible.

In clinical settings, blood loss, iron deficiency, chronic diseases and vitamin deficiency are the main causes of anemia. It had been documented in 1928 that a change in position can alter the blood count. This, which was known by an older generation of physicians, has been forgotten by modern doctors. The red blood count can change drastically from lying to standing!! This is now termed PSEUDOANEMIA.

Standing upright causes the blood to be hemoconcentrated; that is, the plasma or liquid part of the blood leaves the blood vessels and is pooled to the lower parts of the body by gravity. This gives a relatively higher red blood count, hematocrit and hemoglobin left in the vessel. It takes as little as 20 minutes for the blood count to change as much as 18 percent. I'm sure that physicians erroneously have diagnosed acute anemia, transfused, postponed surgery and spent many hundreds of dollars to try to discover what caused a problem that never happened. If a person

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has had their blood taken after they have been standing up for 20 minutes and then briefly sat down, with the blood being retaken later lying in bed, such as frequently occurs in a hospital setting, the blood count could drop significantly. For every three point drop of a hematocrit and every one point drop of hemoglobin is one unit of blood loss' is the formula doctors use in determining blood replacement.

A study funded by the National Institutes of Health at Vanderbilt University Autonomic Dysfunction Center, verified and reintroduced this concept of PSEUDOANEMIA. The article was published in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings (May 2005; 80(5):611-614). Your doctor may not have heard of this and if not, please acquaint him with this phenomena, particularly if they are considering you or a loved one needing transfusion or postponement/delay of surgery, or a detailed work up for anemia, when it was only a change in position that caused the apparent but not actual anemia — the PSEUDOANEMIA phenomena.

5/16/05