DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
HANNIBAL HOUSE Room No. GRO-C
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE LONDON SE1 6TE
TELEX 883669 TELEPHONE 01-703 6380 EXT GRO-C
GTN (2916)

Your reference:
Our reference:

15 March 1985

Dr I D Fraser
South Western Regional
Transfusion Centre
Southmead Road
BRISTOL BS10 5ND

Dear Dr Fraser

I undertook at the meeting of the Regional Transfusion Directors (RTDs) on the 18th February to keep you in touch with developments on the AIDS front which have implications for the NBTS.

Since Alun and I attended your meeting the Department has written to Regional General Managers asking them to earmark funds for the introduction into the NBTS of a routine screening test for AIDS antibodies. I understand that a number of Directors have seen copies of this letter. The attention of the RGM's was also drawn to the Department's intention to evaluation any commercially produced tests which are to be marketed in the United Kingdom and that advice to the NHS on the suitability of such tests will be given.

The intention is to conduct an initial evaluation at the Virus Reference Laboratory Central Public Health Laboratory Colindale of the diagnostic kits using a panel of well characterised sera. Following this field trials will be undertaken of those kits which have passed the first evaluation. This will involve much larger numbers of samples obtained from Regional Transfusion Centres and to which you have already been asked to contribute by Harold Gunson. The field trials will be carried out in the NBTS, arrangements for this have yet to be made.

Regional Transfusion Directors views on the imperative need for a co-ordinated introduction of screening tests into all centres simultaneously which were expressed at the meeting on the 18 February have been endorsed by the Departmental Expert Advisory Group on AIDS. The Department discussed this important issue with RMOs yesterday: they too endorsed this view.

I am sure you will agree that it is in the interest of the NBTS as a whole to delay the introduction of any routine screening tests until they have been properly evaluated and then to ensure that co-ordinated arrangements are made to use them at all centres. In the meantime any research or independent evaluation activities

will need careful presentational handling to avoid the problems to which RTDs have already drawn our attention.

I will keep you informed of any further developments in these matters which could effect the transfusion service. As you will wish to convey the contents of this letter to RTD colleagues I have taken the liberty of copying it to them.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

Dr Alison Smithies