NOT FOR PUBLICATION

REGIONAL TRANSFUSION DIRECTORS' MEETING

MINUTES OF THE 180TH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 1980 AT THE NORTH-WEST THAMES REGIONAL TRANSFUSION CENTRE, EDGWARE

PRESENT:

Dr G H Tovey (Chairman)
Dr W J Jenkins
Dr G W G Bird
Dr Ann Collins
Dr J Darnborough
Dr T D Davies
Dr H H Gunson
Dr Freda M Roberts
Dr K Ll Rogers
Dr L A D Tovey
Dr W Wagstaff
Dr I D Fraser
Dr C Entwistle
Dr T A Wood
Dr A M Holburn - Blood Group Reference Laboratory
Dr R S Lane - Blood Products Laboratory
Dr A E Bell - Scottish Home and Health Department
Dr C Cameron - Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service
Dr M McClelland - Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service
Col E Parry - Army Blood Supply Depot, Aldershot

Dr Diana Walford - DHSS
Mr S Godfrey - DHSS
Dr P Woodford - DHSS
Mrs S C Yuille - DHSS

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr Godfrey who had succeeded Mr Dutton in the Department, and Dr Woodford.

2. On behalf of members, he congratulated Dr Gunson on his recent appointment to membership of the Royal College of Physicians. He congratulated Dr Bird on his nomination for the Morten Grove-Rasmussen Memorial Award from the American Association of Blood Banks; Dr Bird was the first non-American to win this award. Dr Bird had also recently been elected Regional Councillor for Europe by the International Society for Blood Transfusion. Congratulations were also extended to Dr Wagstaff and to Dr Douglas Lee on their appointments as Fellows of the Royal College of Pathologists.

3. Apologies had been received from Dr Cash and Dr Smith.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. Amendments to the minutes of the meetings on 26 March and 25 June were tabled. It was pointed out also that in the minutes of 25 June, on page 3, item 5b, line 6 "Dr Jean Harris" should read "Dr Jean Harrison". In line 11 "Department" should read "Departments".

MATTERS ARISING

(a) Interferon Supplies

5. A press notice dealing with the use of interferon in cancer therapy, which was issued by the Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research, was tabled for Directors' information.

6. The Chairman reported that recently in Northern Ireland, an attempt had been made to launch an appeal for 300 donors to give blood for the production of interferon to treat a child. The Department of Health and Social Services NI and the Department of Health and Social Security agreed that if such appeals were allowed to go ahead, their number could increase and place a major financial and work-load burden on the NBTS. There was concern about the difficult position which Directors could be placed in if they were approached in the same way by outside bodies to collect material for the production of interferon.

7. Dr Walford said that so far, only 2 Directors had written to say that they could produce buffy coats and asked whether any more Directors were in a position to do so. Several members said that they would let Dr Walford know how much they could produce. Dr Bird and Dr Collins said that they were already providing buffy coats for research projects.

(b) Working group to update the Code of Practice on the use of Blood Cell Separators

8. Dr Jenkins reported that a draft report on questions concerning the Transfusion Service had been prepared and would be finalised at the Group's next meeting.

He agreed to circulate the report to Chairmen for discussion at Divisional meetings, following which it could be discussed at the next RTD meeting.

9. The report included an appendix which compared the cost of using the Haemonetics Model 50 or manual operation in a 4-bedded unit. Dr L A D Tovey had also produced costing data. There was discussion about whether it was appropriate to include costings in the Working Group's report but Directors agreed that they would be very interested to see both sets of figures. The Chairman thought that it would be important for the new Advisory Committee on the NBTS (see paras 25-27) to see the costings when they came to consider the future of plasmapheresis. Dr Bell asked that copies of the report and costings be sent to Scotland for information.

(c) Sale of excess blood products

10. The Chairman had discussed the sale of excess blood products to overseas voluntary transfusion services with Dr Hantchef of the International Red Cross who said that there was already a surplus of immunoglobulins and referred him to the Swiss Red Cross Transfusion Service who might be interested in purchasing from the NBTS.

11. Several members thought that excess blood products might be made available at a reasonable price to countries which could not readily afford to pay the commercial rate, or to international organisations like Oxfam. The Chairman felt that there were difficulties in selling blood products abroad. For example, there was the question of who would pay for the packing and export, what export regulations applied, what would donor opinion be about selling abroad. He felt the time was not right to pursue the matter with the Department but that in due course it might be appropriate to put the matter to the new Advisory Committee.

(d) Product Liability

12. Dr Wood had spoken to Dr Alan Rowe of the British Medical Association who felt that consideration of the draft directive was moving ahead rapidly within the EEC. It was suggested that, as the next step, representatives of Directors might discuss their problems with Mrs Oppenheim, the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

13. Mr Godfrey explained that the Council of Ministers would consider the draft directive again in November. He assured Directors that the Department was very much aware of the NBTS's problems. Mr Cox in DHSS Medicines Branch, who was co-ordinating DHSS views on the draft directive, had offered to meet a small group of Directors. It was agreed that the Chairman and Dr Wood would meet Mr Cox, and then Mrs Oppenheim if this was thought to be necessary. Directors would be kept informed of developments.

(e) BPL Radioimmunoassay test

14. Dr Lane said that the Department's Supply Division was still considering Burroughs-Wellcome's representations concerning their RIA test and until a decision had been reached, he felt unable to issue his test to all Centres who wished it.

15. Dr Walford said that the Burroughs-Wellcome test was being evaluated at the Brentwood Centre and at the Law Hospital. Tests had already been conducted at PHLS and the results were awaited. Also, Dr Walford and a member of the Scientific and Technical Branch of the Department's Supply Division had visited Burroughs-Wellcome and would be submitting a report to the Department on both tests.

16. Directors felt that they might eventually be coerced into buying a more expensive commercial test when they preferred to buy the BPL test. Also, they felt clinicians had to have freedom of choice. Several Directors, expecting to receive the BPL test, had already purchased the related equipment.

17. Directors were also concerned that similar situations might arise in the Transfusion Service in future. For example, Centres might be forbidden to prepare their own antiglobulin reagent or antisera for blood grouping.

18. Members agreed that if this situation had not been settled by the time the Advisory Committee met at the beginning of December, they would put a paper to the Committee through their representatives.

(f) Proportional distribution of blood products

19. Mr Godfrey explained that the principle of pro-rata distribution had been discussed with Regional Administrators and Regional Treasurers who were generally in favour of the proposal. Regional Treasurers had, in fact, agreed to discuss the question with Directors.

20. Dr Rogers asked to see the paper which had been put to Regional Treasurers and Dr Bird asked that all documents put to RHAs, which had implications for the NBTS, should be sent to Directors.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY

21. Mr Godfrey explained that Ministers had approved expenditure of £1.3m over 1980/81 and 1981/82, together with an increase in revenue, for the short-term upgrading of the BPL and to allow for a modest increase in production. At the same time, the Department was encouraging RHAs to increase supplies of plasma to BPL.

22. As for the long-term redevelopment of the BPL, Ministers had instructed officials to investigate the possibility of collaborating with private industry in the redevelopment of the BPL. Initial discussions had taken place with a British company and a paper would be put to Ministers shortly setting out the advantages and disadvantages of such a collaborative venture. Ministers would be asked whether the Department should enter into detailed negotiations.

23. Directors said that they were opposed to the involvement of private industry in the fractionation of blood products; such collaboration could harm the Transfusion Service. Because of exploitation of plasmapheresis donors in developing countries and the risks of transmitting hepatitis international opinion was recommending national self-sufficiency in blood products. The Chairman pointed to the failure of the Travenol/Red Cross collaborative project in the USA.

24. The Chairman said that since the problem seemed mainly to be a financial one, if there were no other way to obtain capital from within the NHS to fund the redevelopment of the BPL he thought that an appeal to donors should be launched asking each to donate £5 worth of stamps. This could raise several million pounds. He suggested that Government could match donors' contribution £ for £.

25. The Chairman asked to receive, as soon as possible, a statement of Directors' views from Divisional Chairmen. It was suggested that Directors in Scotland might wish to add their views.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

26. Mr Godfrey reported that Ministers had agreed to the replacement of the existing Central Committee for the NBTS by an Advisory Committee whose terms of reference were "To advise DHSS and the Welsh Office on the co-ordination of (i) the development and work of Regional Transfusion Centres, and the Central Blood Laboratories in England Wales; (ii) as necessary - the English and Welsh Blood Transfusion Service with that of Scotland."

27. The Advisory Committee would be chaired by Dr Harris (DHSS) and members would be 3 Transfusion Directors (Dr Bird, Dr Gunson and Dr Jenkins), Dr G H Tovey Dr Lane from BPL, a Regional Administrator (Mr Baker from Northern Region), a Regional Medical Officer (Dr Rue from Oxford), and a Regional Treasurer (Mr Layzell from Wessex). Officials from the Health Departments, Welsh Office and possibly Northern Ireland would attend as observers. The Committee would hold its first meeting on 1 December 1980.

28. The Chairman urged Directors to express their views through their representatives to the new Committee.

HUMAN SERUM FOR QUALITY CONTROL IN CLINICAL CHEMISTRY

29. Dr Woodford, speaking to his paper, described the collection situation as at September 1980 and some of the difficulties which had been encountered with the freeze-drying process. These difficulties had now been overcome.

30. The Chairman said that 7 Regions had not been able to meet their target production of serum, and offered to circulate a list showing amounts supplied by each Centre as at 15 September 1980. Directors said that they would have no objections to the list being circulated.

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REVISION OF NBTS47

31. Dr L A D Tovey reported that his Regional group had discussed the collection of statistics by Transfusion Centres and tabled a revised form for consideration. The Chairman asked Directors to discuss the draft at their next Divisional meeting and bring their views to a future RTD meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Ferrous sulphate tablets - paper RTD(80)10

32. The Chairman asked Directors to arrange for a reply to be sent to Mrs Tunnard.

(b) Walking donors - papers circulated by Dr Roberts

33. Not all Directors were convinced that this system was the most suitable for transfusing babies. Other systems which might be preferable were suggested, for example the quadruple 'baby' packs. However, Directors concluded that it would be difficult to dissuade paediatricians from using the walking donor system if that was the system they wished to adopt.

(c) Simplified plastic pack labels - codabar requirements

34. Dr Wagstaff spoke to a paper tabled by Dr Jenkins. Directors approved in principle the idea of a simplified label to assist with the Codabar system.

(d) Blood grouping machines

35. Dr Wagstaff spoke about a user group being set up to study the Groupomatic and Technicon machines and asked Directors to send him names of people in each Region who were conversant with blood grouping machines and who might be willing to join the group.

(e) Control of the Kleihauer test

36. Dr Wagstaff reported that his Centre would take on a quality control test again. There was insufficient material available for all hospitals in the country, but material would be sent to Transfusion Centres who could then circulate it to hospitals in their Region if they wished.

(f) Expenditure review report

37. Following discussion of the report at the meeting on 12 December 1979 when Directors had been asked to send comments to the Department, only one Director had responded to date. The Chairman asked that any Directors who still wished to should sent comments to Mr S Godfrey in Room 1208 at the DHSS, Hannibal House.

(g) Publicity sub-committee

38. The Chairman described the work of the Publicity Sub-Committee and said that there was a need for the Committee to meet soon to consider a new publication which had to be printed by the end of the financial year. The Sub-Committee normally comprised 2 Directors and 3 Donor Organisers but at the moment it had no Director members. The Chairman asked for 2 nominations and suggested that one or both could be consultants in the NBTS, and not necessarily Transfusion Directors.

(h) Awards to donors retiring after 75 or more donations

39. Directors were shown an engraved goblet which Donor Organisers thought would be a suitable award. Mr Godfrey explained that the goblet, if approved by Directors, would have to be put to the Queen's Committee on Awards and Honours for approval of the design. Directors agreed that it should go forward.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

40. The next meeting will take place on 28 January 1981.