

NATIONAL BLOOD



TRANSFUSION SERVICE

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Dr. A. Smithies,
 D.H.S.S.,
 Hannibal House,
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Dear Alison,

re: AIDS

The Regional Transfusion Directors met on Wednesday 11th July, at the C.D.S.C. Colindale, and there was a general discussion on AIDS. Dr. Galbraith and Dr. McEvoy updated us on the role of the C.D.S.C. and the surveillance of AIDS. Dr. Richard Tedder and Dr. John Craske were also present.

It would appear from the discussion that a screening test for AIDS is likely to be available within the next eight weeks or so for trial at the Edgware Centre and then at Bristol and Manchester. The actual incidence of blood donors who may have an antibody to H.T.L.V. III virus is not known. There was considerable discussion on what should be done when a donor is found to be positive for this screening test. For example, should the donor be told that he might be incubating the disease, and do we have to go through all the previous donations that this donor may have given over the last five years and follow up the recipients of such donations. It was also felt that once it is known that the screening test for AIDS is available many members of the public may turn up at blood donor sessions in order to have this test carried out. The P.H.L.S. however, will also wish to evaluate this test and make it available to the 52 P.H.L.S. Laboratories in the country. The P.H.L.S. feel that they should provide a diagnostic service for Genitourinary Departments and General Practitioners.

Regional Transfusion Directors felt that they would need legal guidance regarding what to do with a donor who is found to have a positive screening test for AIDS. There was also considerable anxiety as to who will bear the cost of carrying out these tests when they are available to all Transfusion Centres. We heard that the cost per test could vary between 20 pence and £5.

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There was general support for each region to have at least one or two Consultants with special experience and knowledge of AIDS where donors could be referred who are found to give a positive screening test.

It was also abundantly clear that the Regional Transfusion Directors, the P.H.L.S. and the C.D.S.C., were unanimous in the view that the D.H.S.S. should set up, urgently, a Working Party on AIDS as when the screening test for this disease is generally available there will be numerous problems to sort out.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

I. D. Fraser
DIRECTOR