

1. Dr Harris - if you agree
2. Mr Venning

Min Parris

GRO-C

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## HEPATITIS B VACCINE : GUIDANCE TO THE PROFESSIONS ON USE

### The Issue

Dissemination of guidance to the NHS concerning priority groups for the receipt of the new hepatitis B vaccine due to become available shortly in very limited quantity.

### The Background

Merck, Sharpe and Dohme will shortly be releasing a very limited quantity of the new hepatitis B vaccine - enough for approximately 15,000 individuals. In September, MS(H) agreed the line then proposed for disseminating guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to RMO's and individual enquirers on the use of this new American vaccine. Minister had previously decided that, because of its high cost (£63.60 per course) this vaccine was not be included in our schedule of public policy vaccinations. Nevertheless there is no bar to its perscription by medical practitioners, some of whom will be concerned about the limited supply available.

It is clear now that wider distribution of the JCVI guidance, which is based on recommendations from the Advisory Group on Hepatitis, is necessary. The Advisory Group at its meeting this week recommended most strongly that the guidance be circulated within the NHS. With the assistance of the Advisory Group those meriting highest priority have been defined and are set out in the Appendix of the attached draft CMO/CNO letter. Because of the low incidence of the disease even in the high risk groups, advice is given that the vaccine should be limited to specific individuals at special risk within these groups. The text has been drafted with a view to avoiding Trade Union criticism, especially from the ASTMS, that the vaccine will not be liberally available to all their members who might be at risk.

As pressure is mounting for early guidance, we should like to issue the CMO/CNO letter next week. It is not intended that its issue be publicised by the Department.

### Submission

The Minister's agreement is sought to sending out guidance in the form of the attached CMO/CNO letter and with the timing proposed.

GRO-C

DR IAN T FIELD

SPMO

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8th October 1982

cc. Mr Clark  
Mrs Walden  
Dr Smithies

Mr Bolitho  
Mr de Peyer  
Dr Sibellas

✓ Miss Stuart  
Dr Walford