

PR WEEK



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Drug firm launches AIDS diagnosis kit lobbying campaign

Abbott Laboratories, the US drug company which produces an AIDS diagnosis kit, has launched a lobbying campaign to persuade the Department of Health to use its product in the UK.

The Abbott kit, which is already in extensive worldwide use, was rejected by the DHSS after failing a preliminary

test carried out by the Public Health Laboratory Service.

Now Abbott is seeking a reversal of the Department's decision, and is campaigning to be accepted for the final trials, which will assess its suitability for the National Blood Transfusion Service.

An Abbott company

spokesman said: 'We are surprised and concerned that we might not have the opportunity of supplying our kits to Britain. Most of the AIDS diagnostic kits used worldwide are Abbott kits. The Abbott test is the most sensitive for HTLV III antibody as has been shown by trials in the US and Europe.'

HTLV III is the scientific name for the virus that can lead to AIDS, and the Abbott kit can detect carriers of this virus.

'Failure to use our kits means increased risk of infected blood passing undetected into the Blood Transfusion Service,' said the Abbott spokesman.

In the US it costs £1.20 to test one blood sample; the National Health Service here would be charged about £1.60, which Abbott says is not an excessive mark-up. It estimates the total value of the market to be in the region of £4-5m a year. It is estimated that Abbott's world share amounts to at least 80%.

Abbott's head of AIDS

research and development in Chicago, Dr Derek Bonewitz, visited Britain earlier this month to lobby the Department of Health and leading British virologists, as well as AIDS Advisory Committee.

He claimed the clinical trials were inappropriate and unsuited to the kit, and pointed out that only 400 blood samples were used.

The company will put across its message at a symposium next month, for Blood Transfusion Service directors, DHSS civil servants and local health authority representatives. There will be demonstrations of how the kit performs, backed up by Abbott's own clinical trials based on 10,000 blood samples.

HUGH MOONEY

Bomb blast hotel re-opening for CSL

Communications Strategy has been appointed to handle the re-opening of The Grand Hotel, Brighton, which is to be ready for business at the end of Autumn 1986, following the terrorist bomb attack upon the Prime Minister and her Cabinet last October.

The hotel is owned by the De Vere Hotels group, now part of the Greenhall Whitley group. Greenhall Whitley decided against appointing its own PR consultancy, the Manchester based City Press, preferring to go for a consultancy nearer to the hotel. Janet Eagleson, marketing executive for Greenhall Whitley, said: 'We approached a number of consultancies, but



Smith kicks-off PR-Index '85

Douglas Smith, chairman of the Public Relations Consultants Association, is to open PR-Index '85, the exhibition for the public relations industry to be held at Wembley Conference Centre next week.

Smith told *PR Week*: 'As the first-ever independently

