

BRIEFING FOR MR PATTEN'S VISIT TO THE USA

AIDS transmission via blood/blood products

To reduce the risk of transmission via blood or blood products we are taking four complementary steps:

1. Firstly, we have mounted a campaign to dissuade people in AIDS high risk groups from donating blood. In Britain both blood and plasma donors are unpaid and entirely voluntary. This has considerably helped our campaign of dissuasion.
2. Secondly, we shall shortly introduce a screening test for all blood donations, once we have evaluated the American, British and European test kits available. A test will be introduced within the next few months to screen all blood given by blood donors for antibodies to the virus. We expect that the number of blood donors found to have antibodies is likely to be small. Arrangements will also be made for Sexually Transmitted Diseases clinics to provide an AIDS test for people who fear they may have been exposed to the disease.
3. Thirdly, we are pressing ahead with heat treatment of blood products to inactivate AIDS virus, where this is technically possible. All of our home produced Factor VIII is now heat treated.
4. Fourthly, Britain is committed to achieving self-sufficiency in blood products in line with a World Health Organisation recommendation; we are already self-sufficient in blood. In 1982 we commissioned the building of a national Blood Products Laboratory, and the project is on target for completion early next year. This is a major capital investment of ^{over} £35m [51 m dollars]. Medical experts ^{and Departmental officials} from the ~~National Blood Transfusion Service~~ were greatly helped in their endeavours by their recent visit to the AIDS conference in Atlanta. Continuing international co-operation is regarded as highly desirable.

Mr Williams →
Mr Patten →
GRO-C