

PRESS RELEASE

Richmond House
10 Whitehall
London SW 1A 2NS

Telephone 01-210 5963

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NATIONAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

Edwina Currie, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, today announced that new management arrangements would be made to provide a formal national management structure for the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS). Replying to a Parliamentary Question from Ian Taylor, MP for Esher, Mrs. Currie said:

"We have decided that new management arrangements are needed for the supra regional and national dimension of the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS).

"We therefore intend that operational responsibility at the national level for the NBTS and the Central Blood Laboratories Authority (CBLA) will be exercised on behalf of the Health Ministers for England and Wales by the NHS Management Board and undertaken by its Director of Operations, in consultation in respect of Wales with the Director, NHS Wales. Day to day implementation of the national strategy will be delegated to a new National Director of the NBTS and a small supporting staff.

"The key objectives will be:

- a) to implement a cost effective strategy for ensuring an adequate supply of blood throughout England and Wales;
- b) to implement a cost effective strategy for the supply of plasma to the blood products laboratory of the CBLA;
- c) to co-ordinate the activities of the NBTS and the CBLA;
- d) to promote the efficiency of the NBTS.

(MORE)

"In implementing the objectives at a) and b) a priority task will be to remove financial disincentives by having a national system of processing and handling charges both between transfusion centres and between them and the CBLA. No charges will be made, of course, for freely donated blood.

"The National Director will be Dr. Harold Gunson who is at present the Regional Transfusion Director for North Western Region.

"I have arranged for copies of the Report to be placed in the Library".

(END)

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) consists of 13 separate Regional Transfusion Centres (RTCs). South West Thames and South East Thames share a RTC. South Wales has its own centre. North Wales is served by Mersey RTC. A Special Health Authority - the Central Blood Laboratories Authority (CBLA) operates the Blood Products Laboratory (BPL) at Elstree, and the Blood Group Reference Laboratory (BGRL). Each RTC is managed by a consultant grade Regional Transfusion Director (RTD) who is accountable to either the Regional Medical Officer or another senior Regional Health Authority manager. The BPL and BGRL are each managed by a director who is accountable to the CBLA Chief Executive.

2. RTCs carry out differing functions according to the demands of the Regional Health Authority. Common to all RTCs is the collecting and testing of blood; separating blood into components; sending fresh frozen plasma to BPL; issuing blood to hospitals; providing a blood grouping service and medical advice on transfusion. Peripheral services which are not provided by all RTCs include tissue-typing and ante-natal testing. CBLA, through the BPL, is responsible for processing the plasma received into a range of blood products.

3. In October 1987, the NHS Management Consultancy Service presented to Ministers a report on the organisation of the NBTS, copies of which have been placed today in the Library of the House of Commons. The report confirmed that the NBTS is able to ensure blood is available for the vast majority of operations in all Regions, and that the regionally managed service enables

RTCs to provide their service in the context of local requirements. However, four underlying problems were identified:

- The absence of reliable management information made comparisons between Regions of effectiveness and performance difficult.
 - Difficulty of the London regions in meeting the needs of their hospitals. There is no direct connection between local demand and the ease with which an RTC can collect blood.
 - Lack of co-ordination between individual RTCs and between the NBTS and the CBLA. There is no system to enable the most effective practices to be identified and used throughout the BTS.
 - Apparent inefficiencies both within and between RTCs. The report suggested that a central initiative was required to provide a national solution to the problems of planning, finance and production.
4. The new National Director will take up his duties later this year and will be devising a detailed strategy to resolve these deficiencies. One of his early priorities is likely to be the introduction of an effective Management Information System throughout the NBTS.