

RESTRICTED - POLICY

To: Mr J Mogford, PS/SofS* From: Mr A Hollebon, PS/PS(H)
Date: 4 January 1995
cc: Mr A Taylor, PS/M(H)
Ms E Woodeson, PS/PS(L)
Ms R Roughton, PS/Perm Sec
Ms S Probert, PS/CE
Dr F Harvey, PS/CMO
Mr J Shaw, DCA
Mr T Heppell, HSSG
Dr J Metters, DCMO
Dr G Winyard, HCD
Ms R Christopherson, ID
Dr A Rejman, HC(M)1
Dr I Nicholas, HP(M)1
Mr C Blake, SOLB4
Mr P Milledge, SOLC2
Mr J Dobson, FCIA-FLIP
Mrs J Griffin, RD2
Mr J Murphy, PMD-COMMS
Mr T Kelly, CA-OPU2
Mr R Scofield, CA-OPU
Mr K Paley, FCIA-FLIP2
Mr D Burrage, CA-OPU2
Miss S Greaves, ID
Mrs J Firth, FCIA
Ms T Fretten, PRU

* with Mr Scofield's submissions
of 21 and 22 December.

HEPATITIS C - THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

1. SoS will wish to be aware that PS(H) has agreed that there should be a look-back exercise as recommended in Roger Scofield's submission dated 22 December to identify those at risk of Hepatitis C infection following blood transfusion or use of blood products. At a meeting today with Dr Metters and officials he considered the letter of 22 December from Lord Fraser and has replied indicating there should be a UK wide look-back exercise with an announcement on Wednesday 11 January (copies of both letters are attached). The pressure applied by the possibility of a Panorama programme on Hepatitis C has been temporarily eased. It was to have been screened 9 January but has now been rescheduled for a later date. However, because of the inevitability of the subject being reported in the Press, PS(H) regarded it important to seize the initiative by making an announcement as soon as possible.

2. PS(H) also agreed that a helpline should be set up; a letter should be sent to GPs; that there should be an inspired PQ and that CMO and Dr Robinson (NBA Medical Director) should front a press briefing.

NBA - PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

3. Mr Scofield's submission of 21 December on future handling of the National Blood Authority's proposals for re-organisation of the Blood Service was also discussed today. It was concluded that in view of the recent high profile of the Blood Service:

- a) The request from the NBA to undertake ALT testing on blood should be refused; and
- b) The development of links with a private sector partner for BPL should be suspended for the time being.

4. PS(H) has spoken to Sir Colin Walker who recognised that these were sensible measures but asked that the door was not closed entirely on a future private sector link for BPL. Sir Colin mentioned that it was likely that Miles would back out of current discussions if there was delay beyond autumn next year. (It is not clear whether Sir Colin meant 1995 or 1996.) PS(H) extended an invitation to Sir Colin for him and John Adey to come to Richmond House to discuss current issues on the Blood Service. This has been arranged for Wednesday 11 January.

5. Officials confirmed that BPL has already improved the efficiency of its operation and that stocks of plasma more closely match processing requirements. It was agreed that PS(H) should visit BPL at an appropriate time to be agreed with Sir Colin.

GRO-C

ANDY HOLLEBON

PS/PS(H)

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