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I am writing to let you know that the Health Protection Agency will tomorrow be announcing the first finding from an ongoing study of evidence of exposure of a haemophiliac patient to vCJD. Abnormal protein associated with vCJD has been identified at autopsy in a single sample taken from the spleen of an elderly patient who died from unrelated causes and with no symptoms of vCJD or other neurological condition.

The transfusion history of the patient is complex, and is still being investigated, although it is known that during the 1990s he received clotting factor from a donor who later developed clinical vCJD. It is possible, therefore, that this may represent the first case of transmission via a blood product.

Whilst it is very unlikely that this new finding will change the risk status of any patient, I am deeply conscious of the anxiety that this will cause to members of the haemophilia community and their families.

My priority is to ensure that all patients receive expert advice as soon as possible, as to whether there are any implications for each of them. This will be done through their haemophilia centre clinicians.

I enclose a copy of the letter and information pack which has been sent to all haemophilia centre doctors today, together with draft letters for them to personalise and send to all patients under their care who have already been notified that they are "at risk of vCJD". This information has been prepared jointly by the Health Protection Agency and the UK Haemophilia Centre Doctors' Organisation.

**DAWN PRIMAROLO**