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# NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

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JFH/cb

1 July 1991

BY FAX

Professor J-P Allain  
Regional Transfusion & Imuno-Haematology Centre  
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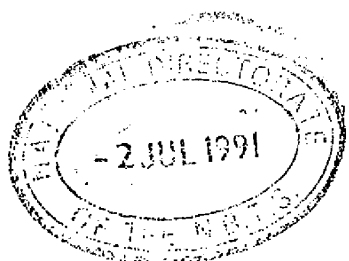
Dear Professor Allain,

Thank you for your letter of 26th June 1991 outlining your proposals for a study of anti-HCV antibodies in blood donors and recipients of blood during the months of July and August 1991. My colleagues and I have discussed this proposal and thought about it very carefully. I regret to say that we have decided that we cannot participate in this trial since we are not happy with the ethics of this trial at this stage.

I have tried to put myself in the position of a patient, receiving a blood transfusion and then being called to see the GP six months later. Following this, I, the patient, might be told that I have an infection with Hepatitis C and I am given information about the consequences of that. I would then ask my GP whether the infection was due to the blood transfusion and the GP would tell me that it definitely was due to the blood transfusion (we would even have the information that the patient was negative for HCV antibodies prior to the transfusion). I would then ask my GP whether, since he was able to test me for this infection, the donors of the blood could have been tested for this infection. The answer to that question also has to be yes and even if the GP informs the patient that testing antibodies to the HCV virus had only commenced in September whereas the transfusion had taken place in July or August, the patient could still argue that testing for antibodies to HCV could have started before September and indeed, testing in the Newcastle BTS did start before September. If I was the patient, I would then be tempted to seek the advice of my solicitor and with some justification.

I applaud your attempts to perform the study you suggest but I believe that it is too late. The Blood Transfusion Service and their clinical colleagues should have performed this study months if not years ago and stored samples until the anti-HCV test became available. Such a study, performed before an anti-HCV test was available would have been perfectly justified ethically.

cont'd



HHG 6/2

Professor Allain

2 of 2

1 July 1991

I hope that you do not think that we are being unco-operative in declining to participate in your proposed study. We would have been delighted to collaborate but for our feelings about the ethical and possible medico-legal implications.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Jean F Harrison  
Director

cc: Dr H H Gunson

HHG 6/3