

DRAFT NEWS RELEASE

NEW MEASURES TO COUNTER AIDS

The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service has announced today that all Scottish produced supplies of Factor VIII have now been heat treated to counter HTLV III, the virus that can cause AIDS. Factor VIII is the blood product used in the treatment of haemophiliacs and is supplied to the NHS in Scotland by the SNBTS.

This move follows the recent discovery that 15 Scottish haemophiliac patients treated with a particular batch of Factor VIII have developed antibodies to HTLV III. It is suspected that a pool of plasma used to prepare this batch [of Factor VIII] contained blood from a donor who had been exposed to the virus. The batch has since been withdrawn, ~~and every effort is being made to trace the source.~~

Doctors have stressed that although some haemophilia patients treated with Factor VIII develop HTLV III antibodies this certainly does not mean that they have AIDS, or even that they will necessarily go on to get the disease. The problem is much smaller than in most other countries, because in recent years Scotland has become virtually self-sufficient in the production of Factor VIII and has imported very little commercially produced Factor VIII which carries a greater risk of transmitting AIDS.

The transfusion service has renewed its request that donors in groups known to have an above average risk of contracting AIDS should not give blood because of the risk of transmitting the virus. A revised leaflet explaining this is being issued to all blood donors, who are being asked to sign a statement that they have read the leaflet and are not in one of the risk groups.

A copy of the leaflet is attached.