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Blood Products Laboratory
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Plasma Fractionation Laboratory
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Telephone: Direct Line
via Hospital

GRO-C

29th October, 1980.

Dr. A. Aronstam,
Lord Mayor Treloar College,
Alton,
Hants.

Dear Dr. Aronstam,

I refer to your letter in the BMJ of 20th September, 1980 (Vol. 281, page 810). Your remarks about provision of plasma from Wessex Regional Transfusion Service well illustrate how misleading half-truths can be.

The situation is that Wessex was unable to increase the provision of plasma to the Blood Products Laboratory in the agreed form, namely 5 l. packs, in conformity with all the other Regional Transfusion Centres.

The Plasma Fractionation Laboratory, Oxford, had begun to take plasma in single donations from Oxford RTC in an effort to boost plasma intake from Oxford, in spite of the fact that the only method known to us of opening the present packs (developed at the New York Blood Center) has serious drawbacks, not least the exposure of staff to most unpleasant working conditions (handling packs immediately after immersion in liquid nitrogen). This method is difficult enough on the relatively small scale of our operation at Oxford and would be quite impractical on the scale of operation at BPL, Elstree.

Pending the ability of Oxford RTC to supply plasma up to the limit of the capacity of the Plasma Fractionation Laboratory, I had the support of my staff in volunteering to accept sufficient single donations from Wessex to absorb our "spare" capacity. This offer was made in the light of the long association between Oxford and Lord Mayor Treloar College, and our appreciation of the special difficulties its situation causes the Wessex region - not dissimilar to the special difficulties in Oxford.

Our limited ability to open single packs was made clear to Dr. Smith from the beginning. Nevertheless, as soon as we started to accept the single donations from Wessex, Dr. Smith ceased to send any 5 l. packs to BPL, Elstree, and put the whole burden of fractionation of his plasma production for factor VIII concentrate on to this small laboratory at Oxford. It was hardly surprising that he rapidly out-

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stripped the small amount of spare capacity we had offered. Moreover, despite an initial undertaking to supply plasma from blood collected into CPD anticoagulant, he switched to ACD, which gives a lower yield for the same amount of work from our staff. It was because he was offering plasma in a non-standard form, that he was told there was not the capacity to handle the extra plasma.

Dr. R.S. Lane, Director of the Blood Products Laboratory, has initiated a major undertaking with the object of solving the problem of opening large numbers of single packs of frozen plasma under hygienic and acceptable working conditions. This involves a different plastic, a different shape of bag and a large investment in developing a special machine to open it.

I am indeed glad that the BMJ is not normal reading for my production laboratory staff. They have put a great deal of effort into helping Wessex and an ill-informed letter such as yours would be most discouraging. I would welcome a visit from you to see how these packs have to be opened at present. You would then appreciate the reaction of those members of the staff of this laboratory who did read your letter.

It is not my intention to enter into an unseemly and unproductive wrangle with Wessex Region in the columns of the BMJ, and for this reason I am sending copies of this letter to those whom I am most concerned should at least have the rest of the facts. A list of the recipients is appended.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

Ethel Bidwell.
Head of Plasma Fractionation
Laboratory, Oxford.

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Copies of letter to Dr. Aronstam of 29.10.80 to the following:

Dr.J.D. Cash, National Medical Director, Scottish Blood Transfusion Service.

Dr. G.H. Tovey, Medical Advisor to DHSS on Blood Transfusion.

Dr. D. Walford, Medicines Division, DHSS.

Dr. R.S. Lane, Director, Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree.

Dr. J.K. Smith, Scientist in charge, Production Laboratory, PFL.

Dr. H.H. Gunson, Director, North Western RTC (formerly Director, Oxford RTC).

Dr. C.C. Entwistle, Director, Oxford RTC.

Dr. Rosemary Rue, Regional Medical Officer, Oxford Regional Health Authority.

Dr. D.S. Smith, Director, Wessex RTC.

Dr. W.J.E. McKee, Regional Medical Officer, Wessex Regional Health Authority.

Professor A.L. Bloom, Chairman, Haemophilia Centre Directors.

Dr. P. Jones, Director, Newcastle Haemophilia Centre.

Dr. C.R. Rizza, Director, Oxford Haemophilia Centre.

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