



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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*From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

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Nicholas Baker Esq MP

25 AUG 83

*Dear Nicholas,*

Thank you for your letter of 27 July to John Patten enclosing a note from Mr J O'Rourke of GRO-C, GRO-C about the monitoring of AIDS cases and the supply of blood products in this country.

I should first of all explain that the criteria used in this country for the identification of AIDS are the same as those used in the USA. Using these criteria, 14 cases have been identified in this country and a further two are under investigation. The Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre (CDSC), Colindale is monitoring cases and is also making available to me a summary of information received from doctors about the incidence, identification and method of control of AIDS. A special survey to report early information on possible cases has been initiated by Haemophilia Centre Directors.

Some under reporting may have occurred, but I believe that the publications which have already appeared in the medical press and initiatives by CDSC provide sufficient and adequate guidance on information about AIDS given the present stage of medical knowledge of this disease. I cannot comment on remarks attributed to Professor John Hobbs. However, the CDSC inform me that they have received no reports from him.

Turning to Mr O'Rourke's suggestion that Factor VIII should be imported from Switzerland, I am afraid that the Swiss Red Cross hold no plasma surplus to their own requirements. We have of course examined several alternative sources of supply. Unfortunately AIDS has been reported in some European countries, so that European plasma may not be free from the Agent. As David Trefgarne explained, we are committed to making this country self-sufficient in blood products - the National Transfusion Service already meets all our requirements for whole blood - and have authorised the redevelopment of the Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree at a cost of around £21 million.

Finally, I would like to stress that there is as yet no proof that AIDS is transmitted by blood or blood products. Nevertheless, we are anxious to minimise any possible risk of transmission of the disease by blood donation and as you know from David Trefgarne, Transfusion Directors will avoid, wherever possible, bleeding donors from high risk groups.

GRO-C

THE LORD GLENARTHUR