



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Notice of Written Ministerial Statement

**Title of Secretary of State/Ministerial
head of department: The Secretary of State for Health**

**Subject of Statement: Secondary Transmission of Variant CJD
Recommendations for Further Health Precautions**

Date on which written statement to be made: ¹ 20 July 2005

1. Notice of written Statements for the following day will be placed on the effective Orders of the Day. Otherwise, the notices will be placed on Future Business E (written ministerial statements). Notices may be given of written statements to be made not later than 5 sitting days after the day on which notice was given.

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

20 July 2005

The Secretary of State for Health: Written Ministerial Statement on secondary transmission of variant CJD recommendations for further health precautions

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health (Caroline Flint):

Further to the statements made to the House by the then Secretary of State (Dr John Reid) on 17 December 2003 and 16 March 2004 (and the written statements of 22 July 2004 and 9 September 2004) concerning variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) and blood, I wish to provide a further update on this subject.

Following cases of possible transmission of vCJD by blood transfusion, we have already put in place a series of precautionary public health measures. These include:

- In December 2003 we put in place arrangements for contacting recipients of blood from donors who went on to develop vCJD so that any necessary action could be taken;
- Since April 2004 we have excluded anyone who has received a blood transfusion since January 1980 from donating blood.
- In September 2004 we announced arrangements to identify and notify patients who had received certain batches of UK manufactured plasma products.

In the light of further advice I have received from two of my Department's expert committees, the CJD Incidents Panel (CJDIP) and the Committee on Microbiological Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (MSBTO), I am now announcing further public health precautions in relation to a small group of blood donors whose blood has been transfused to people who later developed vCJD.

The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, had asked the expert committees to consider the implications for donors where a recipient of their blood had developed vCJD. The recommendations of the committees are based on an assessment of risk undertaken by the Department of Health's analysts. The risk assessment is being published on the Department's website.

There are 110 donors in the UK whose blood was given to three people who later developed vCJD and for whom this blood might be a possible source of their infection. The advice of the committees is that, although we do not know whether these cases of vCJD could be related to the blood that they received,

we should take precautionary steps to inform and support the individual blood donors concerned and to safeguard public health.

As an extension to the current precautionary measures, these people are being contacted by the National Blood Service and advised not to donate blood, tissues or organs. *Current* donors from this group of 110 are being contacted today and offered expert advice and support. The National Blood Service will contact the GPs of *lapsed* donors, that is those who have not donated blood during the last five years, and make arrangements to contact these people as soon as practicable.

The committees have also advised that the donors in question should be considered at risk of vCJD for wider public health purposes and that the donors and their clinicians should be informed of their risk status and asked to implement the public health precautions currently specified by the CJD Incidents Panel. This means that they should inform doctors, nurses and dentists of their status if they present for surgery or other invasive medical procedures.

These public health precautionary measures are the same as those applied to any patients considered by the CJDIP to be at risk of vCJD, including the individuals notified following the previous statements to the House.

There is another group of people for whom further public health precautions may need to be considered. This group is all the other recipients of blood from the currently identified group of 110 donors (estimated to be up to 3,000 individuals). At present, these people are already excluded from blood donation themselves by the measures implemented in April 2004. I have asked for additional expert advice on this group and I will take further action if necessary.

Blood donors should be assured that it is not possible to contract vCJD by giving blood. Blood donors are highly committed to helping others and we greatly value their contribution. The NHS depends on their continued commitment to donating blood which saves lives every day in this country.

The vast majority of the over two million current blood donors will not be involved in this new safety measure and need take no action. However, current and past blood donors who are concerned can contact the National Blood Service helpline on 0845 7711 711.

People who have received blood donations and other members of the public who are concerned should contact NHS Direct on 0845 850 9850.

As with our actions to date on the possible transmission of vCJD, we continue to follow a highly precautionary approach.