

2 under 1

~~Please copy to Mr. T...~~



B. Luthersan

Chairman

Sir Christopher Mallaby GCMG GCVO

Alliance House
12 Caxton Street
London SW1H 0QS
Telephone: 0171-976 7640
Facsimile: 0171-976 7641

4 March, 1998

Dear Members

Following last weeks media coverage about new variant Creutzfeld Jacob Disease (nvCJD) and the blood supply, this letter brings you up to date with our views.

The PiA does not regard the situation as materially changed since we wrote to you on 17 November 1997.

As we said then it is theoretically possible that nvCJD, the human equivalent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), could be present in the UK blood supply, if people with undiagnosed nvCJD give blood. It is not known whether that infection, if present in the blood supplies, could be passed to people receiving blood. Nor is it known whether products derived from blood, such as immunoglobulins, would contain the infection or pass it to patients.

The hypothetical risk that blood or blood products could transmit nvCJD infection must be balanced against the need for people with primary immunodeficiencies to receive the right treatment. Products derived from UK blood are currently an essential part of that treatment.

The Department of Health, with the expert advice available to it, has signalled a review of the use of UK sourced plasma and decided to permit UK manufacturers of immunoglobulins to import plasma from elsewhere for the production of blood products. The Secretary of State, Frank Dobson, said, 'If there is even a hypothetical risk and there are available safe alternative sources of products, then it makes sense to use them.'

The PiA will press for this to be reflected in the treatment of people with primary immunodeficiency as soon as possible and for new patients to be started on treatment with immunoglobulins derived from non-UK plasma. Any change in therapy must be to established products with a track record of safety.

The Department of Health will allow British producers of blood products to seek plasma supplies from other countries where there is little or no risk of nvCJD being present. In the PiA's view it should indeed be a first purpose of the Department to ensure continued regular supplies of safe immunoglobulins. Care will be needed to ensure that plasma imported into the UK for processing is free of infection of all kinds. The PiA will liaise closely with UK manufacturers and will keep you fully informed of developments.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

Sir Christopher Mallaby
Chairman

Katherine - just
received this from
PiA - thought you
might be interested

GRO-C

Formerly the HGG Society
Registered Charity Number 803217
Related to the Association of
Medical Research Charities