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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

To: Regional Health Authorities)
District Health Authorities)
Special Health Authorities for the London)
Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals) for action
Central Blood Laboratories Authority)
Public Health Laboratory Service Board)
Family Practitioner Committees)

Community Health Councils — for information

June 1986

HEALTH SERVICES DEVELOPMENT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS (ACDP):
REVISED GUIDELINES ON LAV/HTLV III — THE CAUSATIVE
AGENT OF AIDS AND RELATED CONDITIONS

SUMMARY

This Notice introduces Guidelines, drawn up by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, which set out the measures to be taken to safeguard the health and safety of people who, because of their work, come into direct contact with AIDS or other LAV/HTLV III infected patients, or specimens from them. They are a revision of Interim Guidelines issued under cover of HC(85)2.

INTRODUCTION

1. In its revision of the Guidelines the ACDP is still aiming primarily at clinical and laboratory staff, other hospital workers and researchers who may have contact with AIDS patients and others infected with LAV/HTLV III, or specimens from them. However the Guidelines contain a great deal of information, based on the most up to date scientific work, that will be of interest to a wider audience. ACDP recommends that the Guidelines be adopted whenever LAV/HTLV III infection is suspected or has been diagnosed. The Committee will continue to keep abreast of scientific development and knowledge in respect of LAV/HTLV III, the enclosed Guidelines will however remain in force for the foreseeable future.

CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

2. These new Guidelines reflect a substantial body of epidemiological information which shows that airborne transmission of the virus during the course of patient contact and treatment and in clinical laboratory work is most unlikely.

3. Emphasis is placed on avoiding direct (or indirect) parenteral exposure to blood and body fluids which is the main risk, but as the possibility of LAV/HTLV III infection arising from an unusually high respiratory challenge still can not be entirely dismissed it is recommended that propagation and concentration of the virus be conducted at Containment Level 3. The Guidelines encourage the maintenance and use of good practice in terms of disinfection, simple personal protection measures and the safe disposal of contaminated waste.

4. For the clinical laboratory examination of LAV/HTLV III specimens, work should be conducted at a defined work-station in a laboratory at not less than Containment Level 2. According to the anticipated workload this work station, which allows seclusion primarily to avoid inoculation accidents, may be sited either in a separate room or within a working laboratory. No microbiological safety cabinet is required unless the virus is to be propagated or concentrated, or unless processes are to be used which disperse significant numbers of airborne droplets, or the specimens under examination contain other pathogens for which airborne transmission is a recognised risk.

5. The need to dedicate analytical equipment for work on LAV/HTLV III specimens will come only from a local decision to segregate the work altogether because of the size of the work-load.
6. Isolation of patients infected with LAV/HTLV III is not recommended except where the attending physician considers it necessary for the welfare of the patient or where a secondary infection presents a risk to others, or where the patient is incontinent, bleeding or mentally disturbed.
7. The Guidelines recommend the involvement of all health care workers through safety committees and safety representatives in the development of local policies for infection control.
8. It is the Department's view that any health care staff who experience parenteral exposure to LAV/HTLV III infection in the course of their work should be encouraged to participate in the confidential surveillance scheme operated jointly by the Association of Medical Microbiologists and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre of the PHLS.

ACTION

9. Health Authorities are asked to comply with the recommendations in the revised Guidelines as soon as practicable, and to bring them and this circular to the attention of appropriate staff.

CANCELLATION OF PREVIOUS GUIDANCE

10. HC(85)2 is cancelled.
11. Further copies of the Guidelines are available free of charge from the address below.*

From:

Health Services Division 1B
Room 1225
Hannibal House
Elephant and Castle
LONDON SE1 6TE

Tel. 01-703 6380 Ext. **GRO-C**

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*Further copies of this Notice and the Guidelines may be obtained from DHSS Store, Health Publications Unit, No 2 Site, Manchester Road, Heywood, Lancs OL10 2PZ quoting code and serial number appearing at top right hand corner.

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