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(ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

NOTE OF A MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 1983

Present: Mr J Parker HS1 (Chairman) Miss Z Spencer MB
Mr P Winstanley HS1 Dr J A Nicholson MB
Mr S Green HS1 Dr M J Graveney OCS
Dr R M Oliver MEB SEB Dr M Sibellas MEDIMCD
Dr D Walford MED SEB Mr D S Fanning CHD
Mr P Lister MED SEB Dr J Smith NIBSC
Mr C Wriggleworth HSSB4 Mr M Lort NIBSC
Mr J S Sloggen S/STB

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies had been received from Mr Sharpe (HSSB).

INTRODUCTION

2. Mr Parker explained that the meeting had been arranged to consider the implications for the Department of recent media reports on AIDS and to examine possible courses of action.

PUBLICITY

1. AIDS Leaflet

3. The draft leaflet, prepared at short notice by Regional Transfusion Directors (RTDs), was welcomed as a first step in informing blood donors about AIDS and thus reducing the likelihood of blood being taken from infected donors. However, it was felt that more positive steps should be taken at donor sessions and it was recommended that RTDs should be asked to reconsider their decision not to question potential donors about the presence of symptoms such as night sweats, weight loss etc.

4. It was agreed that Dr Walford should approach the Chairman of Directors to ascertain RTD's views.

- ii. Liaison with the Medical Gay Society (MGS)

5. Dr Walford reported that RTDs had enlisted the cooperation of the MGS in the dissemination of information. The organisation had already placed articles in the gay press offering guidance on AIDS in the absence of any internationally recognised evidence.

6. Mr Fanning suggested that the Home Office should be advised of any proposed action concerning homosexual males.

CONTROL OF IMPORTS

7. The meeting examined the question of restrictions on imports of Factor VIII manufactured from plasma which had been donated before the introduction of the new FDA requirements on 23 March. Miss Spencer explained that the effective application of legal restrictions would present significant practical difficulties and suggested that informal discussions with the companies concerned were more likely to lead to successful control.

8. It was agreed that Medicines Division and Supplies Division should instigate such discussion.

9. Dr Walford emphasised that excessive restrictions on the import of Factor VIII would hold severe consequences for UK haemophiliacs and recommended that the proposed discussions should be used to ascertain the effects of stricter controls on supply. Meanwhile Dr Walford would obtain from Haemophilia Centre Directors details of levels of import of individual brands of Factor VIII.

HEAT-TREATED FACTOR VIII

10. Dr Walford explained that the reduction in yield of Factor VIII per litre of plasma which would result from the manufacture of heat-treated concentrates would almost double production costs. The resource implications of heat-treatment techniques being adopted by the Blood Products Laboratory (BPL) were therefore considerable. However, Haemophilia Centre Directors were adamant that heat-treated products should not be introduced to the market without proper examination and meaningful clinical trials.

11. It was agreed that HS1A should keep a close watch on developments in this area.

PLASMA SUPPLY AND FACTOR VIII PRODUCTION IN THE UK

12. Dr Oliver stressed that UK self-sufficiency in blood products hinged on an improved supply of plasma to BPL. He recommended that Regional Health Authorities should be reminded of the need for an immediate increase in plasma collection.

13. It was agreed that Mr Parker should write again to Regional Administrators rehearsing the benefits of self-sufficiency and pressing for urgent action.

14. It was essential that facilities should be available to handle a rapidly increasing plasma supply and Dr Oliver urged that the utilisation of **all** potential UK fractionation facilities should be considered and the feasibility of a further "speeding-up" of the BPL redevelopment programme examined.

15. It was agreed that if Regions showed a continued reluctance to invest in plasma collection at the present time the provision of Central funds should be considered.

RESEARCH

16. Dr Graveney reported that following the exchange of correspondence with Dr Cotterall (paper v) a formal application for funding was awaited. The final proposal would be considered by the Reproduction and Allied Services Research Liaison Group.

17. There were no objections expressed in principle to Dr Catterall setting up an "expert-group" on AIDS, provided activities were confined to research. The establishment of an independent "Advisory Committee" would be unacceptable.

18. It was agreed that Dr Graveney should liaise with the MRC group on AIDS which Dr Smith reported was shortly to be established.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

19. The meeting noted Dr Gunson's report and the implications of the proposed Council of Europe resolution.

20. It was agreed that when the opportunity to comment arose the potential problems to the UK created by small pool production and the ban of imports should be brought to the Council's attention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CBLA AND REDEVELOPMENT OF BPL (Paper VI)

21. It was agreed that Dr Harris should be asked to seek the comments of the CBLA on the greater use of single donor or small pool products and the introduction of heat-treated Factor VIII.

HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS GROUPS

22. The meeting noted the views of the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (paper VII) but felt that the production of the AIDS leaflet by RTDs and the cooperation and responsible attitude of Gay representative groups shown to date would help to dispel fears of a lack of concern by the Department.

23. It was agreed that no further action was needed for the present.

HAEMOPHILIA SOCIETY

24. The meeting acknowledged the part played by the Society in keeping AIDS in perspective.

25. It was agreed that a recommendation be made to the new Administration that an early meeting with Ministers should be arranged.

THE BIOLOGICAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SAFETY OF MEDICINES.

26. Miss Spencer reported that the Sub-Committee would be discussing AIDS at its meeting of 13 July.

HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL

27. It was noted that the Council was to hold a conference on AIDS in the Autumn.

HS1A