

RESTRICTED - POLICY

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Date: 16 April 1997
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TRANSMISSION OF HIV BY BLOOD

1. This is to update Secretary of State on the incident where 3 patients in the Liverpool area, 1 of whom has since died, have received blood components from a single donation given in August last year by a donor who was infected with HIV.
2. It now seems less likely that this story will break before it is made public officially since the relatives of the second living patient now appear to have digested the news and are less inclined to contact the media. What has now come to light is that the donor is a practising homosexual with a number of partners. The first line of defence in relation to blood safety is, of course, self deferral and it is made abundantly clear to prospective donors that they should not give blood if they are a man who has ever had sex with another man. The NBA's leaflet also says "Never give blood just to get an HIV test". In due course, therefore, this incident will need to be used to reinforce these messages with the homosexual community.
3. Preserved samples of the donor's 5 previous donations have been tested and are negative. However, as the donor has been unable to give sufficient information to clearly identify the date on which he became infected, the 1 living recipient of the immediately preceding donation (given in April 1996) is being contacted so that her blood can be tested for HIV infection. As no HIV antibodies could be detected in the August donation, the "window period" would have to be exceptionally long for the April donation to be infectious, and the fact that no trace of infection can be found in the sample from the April donation makes it almost entirely certain that it was not infectious. However, since it is not possible to rule out the possibility altogether, it is necessary to make sure. If, as is expected, the April recipient is HIV negative we can be confident that the August donation was the only one which was infectious.
3. It is still proposed that the existence of this case will be made known through the

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Communicable Diseases Report (CDR) which will appear on the Internet this Friday and in hard copy this Saturday and that the National Blood Authority (NBA) will issue a brief press notice.

4. Meantime, the line to take and Q & A briefing have been updated as attached to cover the eventuality of the story breaking in the meantime.

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