



**Charles Lister**  
**14/03/2001 16:24**

**Sent by: Charles Lister/HSD2**

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**Subject: James Meikle**

Nadine

First some background.

1. James Meikle spoke to NBS this afternoon seeking confirmation that SEAC had endorsed the exclusion of transfusion recipients as blood donors. He also asked about the NBS survey of donors and the planned MSBT meeting in April. The information James Meikle had matches exactly the wording of an information paper given to SEAC at their meeting on 28 February. The relevant extract states:

"The Department of Health is currently undertaking a risk assessment to determine the potential impact on vCJD transmission of excluding transfusion recipients from giving blood. This will be considered by MSBT at their next meeting in April. The results of the risk assessment will need to be set against the impact of such a measure on the blood supply and the ability of the blood service to recruit replacement donors.

A recent survey undertaken by the National Blood Transfusion Service shows that such a measure would reduce blood collections from existing donors by between 8.2% and 15.8% depending on the precise definition of the exclusion rule. Between 7.4% and 13.4% of new donors would be lost. At least 20% of donors do not know whether they have had a transfusion."

SEAC were not asked to comment on this proposal, nor did they.

### **Lines to Take**

Blood transfusions save the lives of thousands of people every year. The risk of transmitting vCJD this way remains theoretical.

The Government takes this theoretical risk very seriously. That is why white blood cells from all

blood for transfusion are removed (leucodepletion) and all blood products are made from imported plasma. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) is currently of the view that all necessary measures to protect the blood supply have already been adopted by the Government.

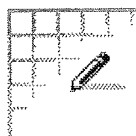
However, it is important that we continue to review the measures in place to ensure that we are doing everything feasible to minimise the theoretical risk of transmitting vCJD through blood. One possible measure would be to exclude blood donors who have themselves received a transfusion in the past. This has not been pursued because of concerns that it would significantly reduce the amount of blood available.

The National Blood Authority has undertaken a survey of donors to discover the size of the potential impact on collections if such a measure were to be introduced. This - together with a DH Risk Assessment - will be considered by the Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation (MSBT) in April.

Happy to discuss.

Charles

----- Forwarded by Charles Lister/HSD2/DOH/GB on 14/03/2001 15:29 -----



**Nadine Smith**  
**14/03/2001 15:38**

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**Subject: James Meikle**

Charles

Maria has explained to me that James Meikle of the Guardian may have seen a copy of a note given to SEAC for information concerning whether those who had received blood from vCJD victims should be blood donors themselves. It is likely that if he has this paper, he will write a story.

He may not come to us for a line because he will know that we cannot comment on leaked documents. However, we need to have a general line on whether those who have been given infected blood can indeed give blood themselves and if so, we will also need a line on whether we are looking at this as an issue. We already have standard lines on blood and how we have taken measures to reduce the theoretical risk of transmission of vCJD through blood, so this will still apply.

We cannot however comment on a document which has been passed as an internal paper and has been leaked. Please let me know if you hear any more about this. A line on donors would be appreciated this afternoon.

Thanks, Nadine.