



Charles Lister
24/01/2001 13:53

Sent by: Charles Lister/HSD2

To: John Stephenson/RD2/DOH/GB@GRO-C
cc: Mike McGovern/HSD2/DOH/GB@GRO-C
Antonia Leigh/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C
Nick Adkin/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C
Jill Taylor/HSD7/DOH/GB@GRO-C

Subject: vCJD & BLOOD PRODUCTS

John

As you probably know, we discovered before Christmas that plasma from a person who now has vCJD was used in a variety of products, including albumin as an excipient in oral polio vaccine used in the Irish Republic. One of the statements made by the Irish Health Minister at the time of their public announcement was that they would endeavour to test a sample of the original BPL albumin for the presence of the infective agent. I have now had a call from Dr John Devlin (DCMO in Ireland) to ask for the Department's assistance on this issue.

The Irish plan is to ask IAH (with whom I think they have had some preliminary discussions) to test the plasma with suitable animal models. The Irish Government sees this as a way of reassuring the public that they are doing everything possible to establish whether or not children have been exposed to vCJD. I understand that the Head of the Irish Medines Board has spoken to BPL who are reluctant to release the small quantity of the original albumin they have remaining (possibly only 2-3 vials, though I have not yet been able to confirm this with BPL). BPL, I'm told, have say that they are holding on to this so that it can be subjected to a blood screening test for vCJD when one becomes available.

I have no idea what quantities of albumin, IAH would need for experimental purposes or how such an experiment would fit into the existing research programme or (availability aside) whether it makes more sense scientifically to wait for a screening test or use up the albumin now on animal experiments. Grateful for any guidance you give me on this.

It's possible that this might get raised with CMO when he visits Ireland on Friday, so we will need to send him a quick briefing note.

Charles