1. CMO
2. SoS

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Copies: see attached list

vCJD and Blood Donation: Update on Patient Notification

Issue

1. This note updates you on the current position with notification of the patients who received potentially contaminated blood and plasma derivatives, and is for information only.

Background

2. The Ministerial statement on 17 December referred to 15 people in England and Wales who received donations of blood from donors who subsequently developed vCJD, and made it clear that all would be told and have the opportunity to discuss their case with expert counsellors.

   The Health Protection Agency (HPA), with the National Blood Service (NBS) were asked to follow up notification of these individuals as quickly as possible. There were a further two recipients of blood in Scotland.

3. In addition, Ministers noted that there were many patients, including haemophiliacs, who had received lower risk plasma products. The CJD Incidents Panel would advise on a case by case basis which of these patients should be contacted, as more information became available.

4. The committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation was also asked to advise on any further precautionary actions necessary to protect the blood supply. The committee is meeting accordingly on 6 February. SEAC will be considering any wider implications of the new information at its meeting on 25 February.

Current Position

5. Of the 15 recipients of blood, one is deceased and 14 are currently alive (12 in England and two in Wales). 10 of the 12 recipients in England have now been contacted. The GPs of the remaining patients have been contacted and are arranging to counsel the patients imminently. We are aware of one patient to date who has apparently taken the news badly, and reacted angrily. One of the two patients in Wales has been contacted and an appointment is pending for the other. One of the two recipients in Scotland has been notified to date.

6. Since the statement we have become aware of an additional donor in England who subsequently developed vCJD: four recipients have so far been identified, of which two are thought to be living. Arrangements will be put in place to contact them as for the other recipients.

7. In relation to the larger number of plasma derivative recipients, the HPA is working on behalf of the CJD Incidents Panel to carry out the risk assessments on a case by case basis. As a result of the highly precautionary approach taken by The Panel, the contactable group may well include all the 2000 haemophilia patients regularly treated with plasma derived clotting factors.

8. Mechanisms for tracing and contacting recipients who would be considered by the Panel to be at risk are being developed by the HPA. The HPA will enhance the support to those healthcare workers responsible for contacting this group of patients, so that their particular needs are met.

Conclusion

9. You are invited to note developments.

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