

: WHCSA Meeting;  
: Cardiff.  
: 26 January 1995.  
:

## **NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE (WALES)**

### **HCV LOOKBACK**

- On Wednesday 11 January 1995, in response to a Parliamentary question, the Department of Health announced they would launch a lookback procedure for the Hepatitis C virus. (This involves tracing potential patients who could have received blood from donors potentially infected with Hepatitis C prior to the instigation of formal Hepatitis C antibody testing within the Transfusion Service in September 1991.)
- Press statements were given by myself and Dr Deirdre Hine, Chief Medical Officer for Wales, to the local media (BBC Wales, Radio Wales and the Western Mail) on the afternoon of Wednesday 11 January 1995.
- A national helpline was set up by the National Blood Authority to deal with incoming calls from concerned patients.
- Guidance letters to GPs and Hospital Consultants were sent by the Welsh Office on Wednesday 11 January 1995.
- A guidance paper was also sent to all our customer hospitals by ourselves on Thursday 12 January 1995, and an information sheet was distributed to all staff.
- Despite the setting up of a national helpline, a number of calls were taken at the Transfusion Service, all of which were answered by myself, Dr Paul Trenchard or Dr Tony Napier. During the two working days of Thursday 12 and Friday 13 January 1995, a total of 80 calls were received, 62 of which were from patients.
- The Department of Health has set up a Working Party to draw up detailed guidance as to how the lookback procedure is to take place. The first meeting of said Working Party was scheduled for the week beginning 16 January 1995.
- In anticipation of this guidance, we have already drawn up a local action plan to identify donors known to be infected by the virus, the donations which they provided prior to 1991 and the destination according to hospitals of these donations. We anticipate that we will have all this information available by the end of the week beginning 23 January 1995 so that when the guidance document is received we will be fully prepared to advance the procedure.

- We anticipate that there may be up to 300 patients in Wales affected by Hepatitis C transmitted by blood transfusion. It is hoped that at the end of the day this will be a gross over-estimate of those patients affected. I anticipate that all patients will need counselling, potential testing for the virus and subsequently referral to appropriate specialist facilities for treatment.
- The reason for the decision to instigate lookback now seems to have been based on:-
  1. The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissue for Transplantation, which is the expert group which advises the Secretaries of State of the four territorial Health Departments on all matters affecting blood safety, recently recommended that a look back exercise should be undertaken.
  2. A potential Panorama programme due to have been broadcast on Monday 9 January 1995 but subsequently broadcast on 16 January 1995 raising this issue
  3. The improved record keeping allowing the tracing of all donations relatively easily from source to patient
  4. The licensing of Interferon Alpha as a palliative treatment for Hepatitis C.

F G WILLIAMS  
Managing Director

A:\BOARD2.DOC  
17 January 1995