



NATIONAL BLOOD AUTHORITY

Oak House
Reeds Crescent
Watford
Herts WD1 1QH
Telephone: 01923 212121 (8 lines)
Fax : 01923 211031

19th May 1995

Prof S R McCann
Medical Director
The Blood Transfusion Service Board
Pelican House
PO Box 97
40 Mespil Road
Dublin 4

Dear Prof McCann

Thank you for your fax received today. I shall look forward to meeting you in the near future.

With regard to HIV testing and Look Back. Testing for HIV began in October 1985 throughout the UK. Following its introduction all donors identified as positive were counselled. During these counselling sessions risk factors were assessed to try and establish when the infection could have been acquired. Most RTC's keep archived samples for 2 years (possibly only 1 year in 1985) the sample from the preceding donation was tested and if positive the recipient(s) were identified and the clinician in charge of the patient was notified. It was then left to the discretion of the clinician responsible for the recipient to determine whether or not to inform the patient, counsel and HIV test. If there were no archived samples from previous donations, a staged Look Back exercise was undertaken, tracing back donations to 1977. Where live recipients were identified, if 3 successive negative live recipients were found no further Look Back was undertaken. This exercise was not completed very well but when the UK government offered compensation for transfusion recipients (In February 1992 - haemophiliacs were offered compensation in January 1990) who had developed transfusion transmitted HIV infection pre October 1985, we were instructed to undertake a comprehensive Look Back to accurately determine all the potential recipients who might have received HIV infected blood from identified positive donors pre 1985.

I was Director of the Yorkshire Transfusion Centre at the time and we certainly made every effort to ensure that clinicians in charge of identified recipients pre October 1985 were aware that if their patient had acquired transfusion transmitted HIV infection then they could claim government compensation.

- 2 -

So the answer to your question is yes, an HIV Look Back did take place in the UK. It began at the time of instituting HIV screening in October 1985 and was pursued energetically 1992 onwards because of the government compensation scheme.

The person who is really well informed about the events at the time and who now helps me sort out all the legal issues on behalf of the NBA is Dr Pat Hewitt at the North London Blood Transfusion Centre, Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5BG, telephone , fax . The London area of course had the highest number of cases and Pat masterminded the HIV Look Back exercise in London and has been involved in cases of litigation. I am sure she would be happy to advise you on the chapter and verse of how the situation was managed in the UK.

The other person who could assist you with the Department of Health official version of events is Dr Andrej Rejman, Department of Health, Eileen House, Room 420, 80 - 94 Newington Causeway, London, SE1 6EF, telephone , fax .

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Dr E Angela E Robinson
Medical Director