

National Blood Transfusion Service
Regional Transfusion Centre
Longley Lane Sheffield S5 7JN
Telephone 0742 387201



Our Ref WW/MS
Your Ref

6th July, 1983.

SENT TO PHS

Dear Colleague,

AIDS Leaflet

I am enclosing a copy of the FINAL form of the leaflet, which you can see has been altered from the original only in the manner of presentation, the question and answer approach seeming to be the most acceptable. The leaflet is now going into print.

The majority of RTDs still feel strongly that approach to donors should be at the lowest key possible and were correspondingly reluctant to either hand the leaflet to every donor at a session or to send it out as part of the call-up material. However, one or two regions felt that there might be some benefit in the slightly more aggressive approach and these RTDs may be asked to run a kind of trial in their regions, by either posting or handing out the leaflets.

There was also consensus opinion against undue stress at donor sessions on the vague symptoms associated with AIDS, and the general opinion is that we should alter the "illness notice" in the most minimum way. The most universally accepted alteration seems to be

- (a) The inclusion of "Unexpected loss of weight", if this does not already figure on your local list, and
- (b) A stress on some form of words to the effect of "Are you in good health or have you needed to see your doctor recently?".

If I have interpreted your replies correctly then all RTDs would presumably agree that such alterations should cause no undue alarm at sessions.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

W. Wagstaff

Enc.

Director: Dr W Wagstaff DTM&H FRC Path

WHY IS A LEAFLET ON AIDS NECESSARY?

Recently there has been considerable publicity in the newspapers, on radio and on television about a new, serious, but rare disease called AIDS. Since AIDS may be transmitted by transfusion of blood and blood products, the National Blood Transfusion Service wants blood donors to have the facts about AIDS.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is short for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. As its name implies, AIDS destroys the body's immune system which normally protects against infection and other illnesses. A person with the disease is therefore at risk of developing serious infections such as pneumonia, or even cancer. AIDS is probably caused by a virus, but this is not known for certain.

WHO IS AT RISK FROM AIDS?

Most of the information about AIDS has come from the U.S.A. where in the past two years or so approximately 1,450 patients have been found to be suffering from AIDS. Certain groups of people appear to be particularly susceptible; these are:-

- (1) Homosexual men who have many different partners.
- (2) Drug addicts, male and female, using injections.
- (3) Sexual contacts of people suffering from AIDS.

It has also been found in a number of immigrants to the U.S.A. from the island of Haiti.

Patients with AIDS also seem more likely to have suffered at some time from various other diseases such as Hepatitis B, syphilis or other sexually transmitted diseases.

HAS AIDS OCCURRED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

Yes, a few cases have been reported, although nothing like as many as in the U.S.A. No-one knows whether more people in the United Kingdom will develop AIDS and a careful watch is being kept for possible cases.

CAN AIDS BE TRANSMITTED BY TRANSFUSION OF BLOOD AND BLOOD PRODUCTS?

Almost certainly yes. There is only the most remote chance of this happening with ordinary blood transfusions given in hospitals. However, in the U.S.A. about 10 patients suffering from haemophilia, an illness in which the blood will not clot, have developed AIDS. Haemophiliacs are more susceptible to AIDS because they need regular injections of a product called Factor VIII. This is made from plasma obtained from many donors. Should just one of the donors be suffering from AIDS, then the Factor VIII could transmit the disease.

HOW CAN RISKS BE REDUCED?

At present, there is no screening test the Transfusion Service can use to detect people with AIDS. So, until there is and until more is known about this disease, donors are requested not to give blood if they think they might either have the disease or be at risk from it.

WILL DONORS BE QUESTIONED ON SEXUAL MATTERS WHEN THEY ATTEND TO GIVE BLOOD?

DEFINITELY NOT.

The National Blood Transfusion Service has a very high regard for donors as extremely responsible people who give blood for the benefit of others and is confident that they would not knowingly put patients at risk from such a serious disease.

WHERE CAN DONORS OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ON AIDS?

Any donor can discuss in confidence whether to give blood, with the doctor on the blood collection session, their own doctor, or the Director of their local Blood Transfusion Centre.

Please remember AIDS is a rare disease but a serious one.