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MEETING BETWEEN CMO AND DR TEDDER, PROFESSOR WEISS AND PROFESSOR ADLER
MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL - 22 MARCH 1985

i. Dr Tedder and Professor Weiss

1. The availability of antibody screening tests was discussed. A number of companies from the United States were entering the market. The screening parameters of these tests were not yet established. Professor Weiss had some reservations about the practicality of mass usage of the confirmatory test now approved by the FDA in the United States.

2. The evaluation of the screening tests to be available for use in the United Kingdom was discussed. CMO asked whether a recognisable and organised system for this evaluation had been set up. In reply it was explained that the PHLS would be responsible for the mechanism of evaluation, under the direction of a working group chaired with this responsibility.

in house group

3. Sera from patients with various defined categories of AIDS presentation would be used to identify tests which appeared to perform well. It was to be anticipated that the bulk of the commercially available tests would pass this initial assessment.

4. It would then be necessary for initially successful kits to be evaluated in service in the BTS, preferably for more than the 1000 tests probably now being proposed.

5. Dr Philip Mortimer from the Virus Reference Laboratory was mentioned as a possible organiser of the evaluation.

6. CMO asked whether there were any practical or financial blocks to this programme being implemented. In reply it was stated that more staff would certainly be required within the Virus Reference Laboratory - with associated revenue consequences.

7. The Tedder/Weiss test was discussed. Naturally they hoped that this would prove to be scientifically and practically acceptable in routine use. At the moment it worked reasonably well as a laboratory tool, but adequate scaling up was still to be achieved. Some delay with the delivery of the bulk antigen from Porton was being experienced.

8. It was agreed that it would probably be necessary for the BTS to go ahead and use the first successful test that became available. This was unlikely to be the Tedder/Weiss test, in the first instance. They themselves were essentially laboratory scientists. They must inevitably now leave the bulk of the commercial exploitation to Wellcome and Porton.

9. The significance of antibody carriage in the absence of the clinical disease was then discussed. There was also the unknown population who were carriers of the disease but who were, as yet, antibody negative - such individuals might still be carriers. Conversion to antibody positivity occurred quite quickly, within six weeks in most cases, but some patients might be resistant to infection, or to infection without producing antibodies. The glandular fever like syndrome that had been described was thought to affect around 10 per cent of those who became antibody positive.

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