

Disc - for information



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GTN **GRO-C**

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TO ALL TRANSFUSION DIRECTORS

Your reference

Our reference

Date

18 August 1983

Dear Director

AIDS LEAFLET

You will shortly receive a stock of the leaflet "AIDS-And how it concerns blood donors" for issue within your region for a trial 6 month period. The means of distribution has been left to individual RTDs. You may well find therefore that your allocation is inadequate or surplus to your requirements. In either case could you please inform Vicki Brown in DHSS Information Division (phone 01-407-5522 x **GRO-C**) as soon as possible.

I would be grateful if, during the trial period you could keep a note of:

- (i) the number of leaflets issued and/or taken
- (ii) the rate of usage per month
- (iii) the method of distribution employed
- (iv) what effect it has had on donor attendance
- (v) any feed-back from donors, favourable or unfavourable

May I take this opportunity, to remind you that all enquiries from the Press or other media about this leaflet should be referred to DHSS, Health Press Office on 01-407-5522.

Thank you for your co-operation.

GRO-C

P. WINSTANLEY

A.I.D.S. AND BLOOD TRANSFUSION

Some Background to the Recent Publicity

There has been a lot of publicity about AIDS in the media recently. We thought we should explain something about the disease for donors who are worried about what it may mean for the Blood Transfusion Service.

What is A.I.D.S.?

It is a disease called:

A I D S

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome which is thought to be caused by an infectious agent, perhaps a virus. So far the cause is unknown. It is a rare disease but it can have serious consequences.

When a person develops AIDS, the body's immune system becomes abnormal and there is a great risk of serious infections and even cancer, both of which can be fatal.

Who can get the disease?

AIDS has been occurring particularly in the U.S.A. in certain people who are apparently susceptible to the disease:

- 1) Homosexual men, particularly those with multiple partners.
- 2) Drug abusers.
- 3) Sexual contacts of those with AIDS.
- 4) Haitian immigrants to the U.S.A.
- 5) Haemophiliacs - who may be more susceptible or may become infected by their use of blood products which may have come from a donor with AIDS.

Most but not all cases have occurred in the homosexual male population, why this should be is not yet known. A small number of young children have been affected.

Has AIDS occurred in the U.K.?

The answer is yes. So far, only a few cases have occurred, and again, these have been in the homosexual male population.

Does this mean the U.K. is relatively safe?

We do not know. The disease is spreading in the U.S.A. and has been reported in several continental European countries. It may be that it has not reached the U.K. yet or to the same extent. If it does, we may have many more cases.

Can it be transmitted by Blood Transfusion?

It appears it can. This might cause the disease in people who are not normally at risk. It may have infected clotting factors that carried AIDS in U.S. haemophiliacs.

We have not had any definite cases of AIDS in Haemophiliacs in the U.K. If the clotting factor concentrate (Factor VIII) can be infected, the cases could occur in the U.K. because much of the Factor VIII is imported from the U.S.A.

The disease cannot be taken lightly. Those getting AIDS may die, because they are more susceptible to serious infections and cancer due to their impaired immune system.

The Blood Transfusion Service is therefore concerned to try and stop any chance of infection spreading by blood transfusion.

We want to ask people who may be at risk from the disease to avoid giving blood until we have a suitable screening test. Many donors will remember we did this with hepatitis until we had screening tests for the hepatitis virus.

Whose blood could be at risk?

Most of our information about at risk groups comes from the U.S.A. However, until more is known about the cause and spread of AIDS, we would ask the following groups to refrain from donating blood:

- 1) Homosexual men.
- 2) Women who continually have multiple sexual partners.
- 3) Partners of bisexual men.
- 4) Anyone who abuses drugs.
- 5) Anyone who has been in contact with a case of AIDS.

We hope that if we take precautions now we can prevent the problem of AIDS which has become serious in the U.S.A.

Remember - it is a rare disease but an important one.

Thank you for your help.

DR. F. A. ALA
MAY, 1983

West Midlands Regional Transfusion Service

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