

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

JMC Minutes (79)5

## NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (DHSS/NORTH WEST THAMES RHA) FOR THE CENTRAL  
BLOOD LABORATORIESMINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 DECEMBER 1979 IN ROOM 62,  
HANNIBAL HOUSE, ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

PRESENT:	Dr E L Harris - Chairman	Dr A M Holburn
	Mr W P N Armour	Professor P L Mollison
	Mr J Harley	Dr G H Tovey
	Mr D G Lee	Dr D Walford
	Dr R S Lane	Mr T E Dutton - Secretary

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J G Brechin  
Mrs S C Yuille

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Bradshaw.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - JMC MINUTES (79)4

These were agreed. The Regional Health Authority apologised for their unavoidable delay in commenting on the draft minutes. Mr Armour undertook to suggest changes to the minutes in order to make them suitable for passing to the staff interests.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

a. PROGRESS WITH ESTATE MANAGEMENT, LETTING OF COTTAGES AND SURVEY  
OF BUILDINGS

Mr Armour explained that as soon as an appropriate form of agreement had been drawn up, the Health Authority intended to let those properties which were not required for the BPL, but no decisions could be reached on letting the houses and cottages to staff until their terms and conditions had been agreed. No arrangements would be entered into which tied down the houses indefinitely.

The Regional Health Authority's survey of the buildings on the Elstree site was still continuing, but some of the ex-Lister buildings could not be examined until they were declared free of microbial contamination. (Dr Robinson from the Department was conducting an examination of the affected buildings in conjunction with the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton.)

Dr Lane spoke about the urgent need to appoint security officers (he was particularly worried about the possibility of squatters taking over some of the vacant buildings) and thought there was a need to offer tied accommodation. It was agreed that the property must be safeguarded, but the number of officers recruited had to depend on how much money was available for this purpose.

Mr Dutton reported that the original BPL lease, which the MRC had agreed to surrender, was in the process of being merged into the Elstree freehold.

b. REPORT ON MINOR BUILDING PROJECTS

Mr Dutton reported that the Department and the Regional Health Authority had recently agreed that Dr Lane should be given the authority to place contracts for minor building works. Work was about to start on 6 schemes, including interim repairs to the sewage plant, and provision of accommodation for the hepatitis testing unit. Mr Lee was drafting standing instructions to govern the handling of minor works.

Dr Lane was concerned that if the number of building projects increased in the next year BPL staff might not be able to cope, and he wondered whether the appointment of a professional building supervisor was appropriate. It was agreed that the advice of the Department's Works Group should be sought on whether it was appropriate to appoint a professional projects manager if the money was available.

Mr Dutton explained that it had been decided to commission an examination of the soil characteristics of the Elstree site to establish whether all parts of the site were suitable for possible future development. Before proceeding with their examination the consultants involved would discuss their intentions for a survey with Dr Lane.

Dr Lane thought that the state of BPL effluent and the laboratory's position in relation to the Colne Valley Water Authority might need to be examined and he agreed to discuss the matter with the RHA before writing to Mr Harley who would consult the Department's solicitors.

c. PROGRESS WITH THE ACQUISITION OF THE HARKNESS BUILDING FOR THE BGRL

Mr Harley reported that the Oxford Area Health Authority (Teaching) had agreed in principle that the building should be made available to the Blood Group Reference Laboratory, and the Authority's final decision was expected shortly. The animal house, which it had earlier been anticipated would be free for the BGRL, was now being refurbished by the MRC for their use, but the Authority had offered alternative animal accommodation which would prove equally suitable. It also appeared that the University workshops on the ground floor, which had been earmarked for storage space for the BGRL, were still being used by the University. It had been suggested through the Health Authority that the Department might provide some modest help with the cost of moving the workshops to a new site; no figure had been disclosed, but the Department had decided that it could offer up to £10,000 towards the cost of the move, this sum coming from the Department's allocation for the move of the BGRL. The Department undertook to ensure that the Authority lost no time in relocating the workshops.

Mr Brechin explained that £200,000 was available in each of the financial years 1979/80 and 1980/81. The reversionary value of the Chelsea lease (possibly as much as £200,000) would, it was hoped, also be available. The total sum would not have to meet the cost of refurbishing the Harkness Building, and the cost of moving the laboratory and staff, but it would also have to meet the redundancy payments of those staff who were unable to move to Oxford. Mr Armour said that he would shortly be asking which staff wished to move to Oxford.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDICINES INSPECTORS' REPORT ON THE BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY

GENERAL SITUATION AND SHORT AND MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENTS

It was estimated that £800,000 would be required in the 1980/81 financial year to undertake the building projects and other works and to buy the equipment necessary to remedy the worst defects identified by Medicines Division. Although a firm bid had been put in for the necessary capital for 1980/81, there was as yet no certainty that it would be available. There were also important revenue consequential as yet to be ascertained, for example, about £30,000 would be required annually for contract cleaning. The services of a senior bacteriologist and a senior design development and maintenance engineer were also needed, and the Committee were invited, after Dr Lane had outlined their responsibilities, to approve the appointments. The Committee agreed to their appointments, subject to endorsement of the proposal by the Scientific and Technical Committee. It was agreed that Dr Lane and the Regional Health Authority should discuss the job descriptions and their relation to similar work done in the NHS, the Department helping to draw up the advertisements for the posts, if necessary.

#### 5. DR LANE'S RESPONSIBILITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE BPL

Mr Harley reported that he had discussed Dr Lane's position with one of the Department's solicitors, but he could give no precise legal opinion because the law on the subject was so complicated and was bound up in so many decided cases. The possibility of indemnifying Dr Lane had also been discussed, but it was not considered possible to issue a blanket indemnity. In view of the situation to be found at the laboratory, the extent of any liability for acts or defaults would only become clear if a case was tested in the courts. After Dr Lane had explained the vulnerability of his position, it was agreed that arrangements should be made for him to discuss his position with the Department's solicitor, and that he should report the outcome at the next meeting of the Committee. Dr Tovey hoped that the Department would also take note of the position of a Regional Transfusion Director who issued a faulty product prepared at BPL. Mr Armour said that the Regional Health Authority were assuming that the DHSS would indemnify them for any damages awarded against them.

#### 6. DR LANE'S AND DR HOLBURN'S JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND SALARIES

Mr Armour reported that he had discussed Dr Lane's job description and salary with him and with the Regional Medical Officer. Dr Holburn's job description would also shortly be drawn up. Dr Harris suggested that Dr Tovey and Professor Mollison might consider what an appropriate salary would be for the Director of BPL.

#### 7. PROPOSAL BY DR LANE TO CHARGE RHAS FOR THE USE OF BPL'S RADIOIMMUNOASSAY TEST FOR HEPATITIS

Dr Lane explained that the BPL test, which was considerably cheaper than its commercial alternative, had up to now been provided free of charge to centres using it on a trial basis. As the test came into more widespread use it seemed reasonable that he should make a charge and some Directors now accepted that this was appropriate. Dr Lane maintained that money raised in this way should be allocated to the laboratory. Mr Brechin and Mr Lee thought that this would only lead to needless cross-accounting and the meeting agreed that it would be more appropriate (if funds allowed) for the Department to finance the arrangements for making the test available to the NHS. Dr Lane would write to the Department's Finance Branch giving details of the costs and anticipated financial benefits. Meanwhile, Dr Lane needed to purchase another test kit at a cost of £22,000. It was thought that as the hepatitis test was technically still at the evaluation stage funding for the new kit should come through Supplies Division. Dr Harris asked Dr Walford to take this question up with Supplies Division.

#### 8. CHARGING THE RADIOCHEMICAL CENTRE, AMERSHAM, FOR THE SUPPLY OF FIBRINOGEN

Dr Lane explained that for some years fibrinogen had been supplied free of charge to

the Radiochemical Centre where it was labelled and subsequently sold at a profit. The Medicines Inspectors had recently recommended that the production of fibrinogen at BPL should cease and if the Centre were to continue to be supplied with this product special facilities would have to be provided at Elstree. It was agreed that before making any decision the Committee would want to know more about the Centre's activities, and whether it could obtain fibrinogen from any other source. The matter should also be put to the Scientific and Technical Committee.

#### 9. PROPORTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BLOOD PRODUCTS

Dr Lane was concerned about the relationship in some Regions between the amount of plasma sent to the BPL and the amount of Factor VIII received back. Some Regions were substantially in credit, others in debt. If the NHS was to attain self-sufficiency in Factor VIII the flow of fresh frozen plasma to the laboratory would have to be increased, but some Regions had made it very plain that they would not produce more plasma unless they could be assured of a proportional return of blood products.

It was agreed that the matter needed to be carefully considered and it was suggested that Dr Lane, Dr Tovey and the Department should prepare a paper for the next meeting of the Joint Management Committee which would examine the case for pro rata distribution, and if a substantial case could be made out would draw up a programme for the introduction of a scheme of pro rata distribution. Several members pointed out that such a scheme would have to be discussed fully with all concerned and introduced only after ample notice had been given of the change since it represented a major switch from the policy of distributing blood products on the basis of established needs.

#### 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

##### a. RELEASING MINUTES AND PAPERS TO THE STAFF SIDE

Mr Armour reminded members that it had been agreed that the staff side should see not only the minutes of the Joint Management Committee, but also those of the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Finance Sub-Committee, and any papers relating to these Committees which it was considered appropriate to release. Mr Armour thought that Part 1 and Part 2 minutes - where Part 1 would be "open" and Part 2 would contain discussion of all confidential matters and would only be seen by members - would be the best solution. Dr Harris thought that the minutes could be edited for the staff side, but it was left to the Department and the Regional Health Authority to consider what was practical in the light of the discussions at the actual meetings.

##### b. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Professor Mollison expressed his disappointment that the minutes of the meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee had not been made available to members and that they had not seen the paper which he had prepared for Ministers on behalf of members of the Scientific and Technical Committee. The Chairman apologised to Professor Mollison and explained that his paper would accompany the Departmental submission which was shortly to be made to Ministers. He anticipated that they would have the Ministers' directions in time for a meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee in January. It was decided that the minutes of the Scientific and Technical Committee and the paper to which Professor Mollison had referred should be sent to members of the Joint Management Committee and that minutes and/or reports from the Scientific and Technical Committee would as routine be on future Joint Management Committee agendas.

#### 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20 February at 2.15 pm at the Department, Hannibal House.