COLLEGE VOOR DE BLOEDTRANSFUSIE
VAN HET NEDERLANDSE RODE KRUIS

The Honourable Mr. Justice Horace Krever
Commission of Inquiry on the
Blood System in Canada
P.O.Box/C.P. 1800
Station "B"/Succursale «B»
OTTAWA, Canada 954-3770

Our ref: C9461/CD/DH

Amsterdam, February 14, 1994

Dear Mr. Justice Krever,

By letter of January 11, 1994 to J.K. van Wijngaarden MD, Inspector of Health to the Dutch Government, you asked for documents and reports dealing with measures which were implemented in the Netherlands to control the contamination of the blood supply with HIV during the early 1980's, as well as material on the structure of the blood system in the Netherlands.

To start with the latter I send you a short description on the organization of the blood supply system in the Netherlands. In this context I want to stress that the blood banks and the Central Laboratory of the Blood Transfusion Service of the Netherlands Red Cross (CLB), although carrying the name and symbol of the Red Cross, are from a judicial point of view independant organizations. Another point that I will stress is that policies in health care in the Netherlands are most often develloped by the organizations in the field and that Government Agencies have been as a whole reluctant to apply official policies. So up till 1993 there was no formal legal obligation for the blood banks to carry out HIV testing on blood donations.

In the following paragraphs I supply you with the specific information you asked for.

- In the May 1983 edition of the 'Netherlands Journal of Medicine' an article is published by the president of the physicians treating haemophiliac patients, emphasizing the possibility that AIDS can be transferred by clotting factor preparations. The advice is: "to use as much as possible cryoprecipitate instead of F.VIII concentrate and if the latter is given to use preparations prepared from plasma of Dutch donors".

- By letter of April 27th, 1983 the President of the Central Medical Blood Transfusion Commission (CMBC) - the predecessor of the Blood Transfusion Council - urges the blood banks to inform

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all donors about the riskgroups for AIDS - people with AIDS, homosexual men, people from Haïti, intravenous drug users and sexual partners of people belonging to these riskgroups - and to stress that all donors belonging to these groups should refrain from donating blood.

- In a report dated December 14th, 1984, the CMBC gives detailed information to the blood banks about the new HIV screeningtests. It is stated that as soon as these tests will be available for routine application in the Netherlands, these should be used.

- In the February 1985 edition of 'The Lancet' Rouzioux and Montaigner from Paris prove for the first time that heat treatment of F.VIII concentrate prevents the transfer of HIV.

- In March 1985 the CMBC publishes a second report on practical implications of the introduction of the HIV test in blood banks.

- In April 1985 the HIV test becomes available in the Netherlands for routine use in the blood banks.

- On May 24th, 1985 the CMBC publishes a third report on the introduction of the HIV test in blood banks. In this report it is stated that from the first of June 1985 all blood donations should be tested.

- In June 1985 the CLB introduces heattreated F.VIII concentrate. No non-heattreated F.VIII concentrate is delivered from that date. In the same announcement it is stated that all stocks of non-heattreated product can be returned to the CLB, and will be replaced by the heattreated product.

- In November 1985 the CLB introduces heattreated cryoprecipitate on the market and non-heattreated product is taken back.

- By January 1986 - after the validation of the Western Blot confirmatory test - seropositive donors are informed about their HIV infection.

- On December 19, 1986 it was decided by the CMBC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, to trace recipients of blood products prepared from blood that was (possibly) contaminated with HIV.

The documents concerning the paragraphs mentioned above are mostly in the Dutch language and therefore not included, but copies can be supplied at your request.

I hope the information is of use for your inquiry. If you might need additional information, I will be glad to provide you with such.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

C Dudok de Wit, MD
secretary general

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cc. JK van Wijngaarden, MD, MPh