

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF AIDS FOR PLASMA SUPPLY
AND MANUFACTURE AT BPL

There are increasing indications that the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) may be transmitted by blood and blood products. Because of the number of donations to which they are exposed, haemophiliacs receiving large-pool FVIII concentrates (such as that manufactured at BPL) might be at greater risk than those receiving single-donor cryoprecipitate or small-pool products.

At a recent Council of Europe meeting a draft resolution was accepted which recommends that the use of coagulation factors prepared from large plasma pools should be avoided except where such a product is specifically indicated for medical reasons. The implication in the resolution is that there should be a greater use of single-donor or small-pool products.

Although, as yet, there appears to have been no move towards an increased use of cryoprecipitate in this country, the time might come when there would be pressure for greater quantities of cryoprecipitate to be available. This could lead to less plasma being available to BPL. Additionally, there could be demands for BPL to manufacture a small-pool product - perhaps a freeze-dried cryoprecipitate. Such pressure could come if a haemophiliac who had received only NHS FVIII concentrate were to develop AIDS.

A further problem could arise when UK licenses are obtained by commercial manufacturers for heat-treated FVIII concentrates. It is likely that such material will be assumed by both clinicians and patients to carry a smaller risk of transmitting AIDS than non-heat-treated material. Again, this may lead to pressure on BPL to produce a heat-treated NHS FVIII concentrate. Because heat treatment involves a substantial reduction in the yield of FVIII, a change to a heat-treated product would presumably require a significant increase in the amount of plasma needed by BPL.

In view of the important consequences nationally of any change in policy for the treatment of haemophilia, the Department would be grateful to receive from the Authority an assessment of the possible impact of AIDS on the activities of BPL and to learn, in particular, whether there are any plans to develop a small-pool FVIII product or a heat-treated FVIII concentrate.

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