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Date: Thursday, 09 March 2000

Dear Sirs,

Re: Hepatitis C

I am writing in respect of your letter of 7th March 2000 which came by fax. May I thank you for the reasonableness of its tone in all the circumstances.

I am able to supply you with some of the papers which you called for in your letter dated 27th January 2000. A list of those documents and the documents themselves is attached. I cannot yet supply the documents listed in Annex A. It is difficult for me to offer anything other than a fairly bald statement as to what happened and why at this stage. As you may know, all departmental documents are kept on registered files. Once these files are no longer current they are sent to remote storage. In the Department of Health's case this is at Nelson Lancashire. Before any documents go to Nelson, they are given a destruction or review date. I generally mark my files (bearing in mind they are generally completed cases) with a ten year destruction date. Policy files, I understand, generally have a twenty year destruction date. In the case of the registered files containing the minutes of the Advisory Committee on the Virological Safety of Blood (ACVSB) for reasons which we do not yet know they were

given an early destruction date and destroyed, as I understand it between 1995 and 1997. We thought there were back up documents held by the Chairman of the ACVSB. However, when he retired in the summer of 1999 there was a clear out of his papers given that they were not registered files. We are seriously contemplating making a more detailed investigation in the matter.

I note what you say about the late production of documents thought to be destroyed. We are still looking.

Yours faithfully

GRO-C

MRS ANITA JAMES
(Head of Litigation)