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Sir Nigel Crisp, KCB,
Chief Executive,
Department of Health and NHS,
Richmond House,
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Your Ref: CEOPO48361

14th December 2005

Dear Nigel,

Thank you for your letter of the 1st December.

As you may imagine this has caused a considerable stir both among some of my colleagues in the House and among the haemophiliac community in the country.

The immediate point that occurs to me is that your fourth paragraph entirely contradicts the explanation you gave me to me orally when we met in your office on Wednesday, 13th April. You then gave me to understand that the destruction of the contaminated blood files was the result "of a decision" to dispose of them as, following the settlement of the HIV cases, there seemed to be no useful purpose in retaining them in the PRO. I am quite certain that I did not misunderstand you; there was no suggestion whatever in what you said that the destruction of the files was the result of an administrative cock-up! Despite what you say that this did not represent "a deliberate attempt to destroy documentation", I am sure that you will recognise that this latest explanation will do nothing to dispel the widely held view among haemophiliacs and others that this was in fact the true explanation.

Two
issues
here

I would be grateful if you would now tell me what is the status and progress on the review of the hepatitis C cases about which Zubeeda Seedat spoke to me while I was examining such files as remain. I have been in touch with Alf Morris who has shown me a letter to him of the 27th July from Melanie Johnson, MP. I enclose a copy of this letter. I can only repeat to you the comment that I made to Ms. Seedat that I could not see how the review could possibly be completed with the crucial files having been destroyed.

However, I would now ask when this report can be expected? The attached letter suggested that there was a draft in existence 18 months ago – what has happened since then? When can we expect the report to be published?

Blood /
NHS report
Lord J.



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All this seems to me to be a very serious case of maladministration by the Department of Health and I am consulting urgently with colleagues as to whether the matter should be referred to Ms. Ann Abrahams, the Parliamentary Ombudsman for the Health Service.

I am copying this letter to Lord Morris of Manchester, to Earl Howe, Opposition Spokesman on Health in the House of Lords and to David Amess, MP, Chairman of the All Party Group on Hepatitis.

Yours

GRO-C