



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY
Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

PO(6)4259/11

John Maples Esq MP

16 DEC 1983
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Dear Mr. Maples,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November addressed to Kenneth Clarke about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and the supply of blood products in this country.

I can well appreciate the anxiety, particularly amongst haemophiliacs and their families which recent press reports on AIDS may have caused and would first of all like to put matters into perspective: the cause of AIDS is as yet unknown and there is no conclusive proof that the disease has been transmitted by American blood products. Nevertheless, I would like to assure your constituent that the Government is committed to making this country self-sufficient in blood products. Over £2m has already been spent on improving the production facilities of the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree, Herts and a major redevelopment programme is under way. When this is complete the Central Blood Laboratories Authority will have a new Laboratory of a size capable of meeting the demands of England and Wales for blood products. Meanwhile, in the absence of a satisfactory alternative, we shall be dependant upon imports from the USA for an adequate supply of Factor VIII. While there is as yet no test for AIDS, such imports, prepared from plasma collected after March this year, will be subject to new regulations initiated by the US Food and Drug Administration, designed to exclude donors from high risk groups, (eg persons with symptoms and signs suggestive of AIDS; sexually active homosexual or bisexual men with multiple partners; intravenous drug abusers). Although future supplies of Factor VIII both for export and for use in America will be manufactured from plasma collected in accordance with these Regulations, there is still a quantity of stock which has been made from "pre-March" plasma. The FDA has recently decided not to ban the use of such stocks because to do so would cause a crisis of supply. The same considerations apply here.

We are of course anxious to minimise the possible risk of the transmission of AIDS by blood donation in this country. My Department, in conjunction with Regional Transfusion Directors, has issued a leaflet "AIDS and how it concerns blood donors" which asks people from high risk groups to refrain from giving blood. A copy is enclosed.

I hope you find this useful.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

THE LORD GLENARTHUR