



NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

NORTH LONDON BLOOD TRANSFUSION CENTRE

DEANSBROOK ROAD

EDGWARE, MIDDX

HAB 9BD

Telephone: 01-952 5511

Dr. M. CONTRERAS

Director

MC/CHP

19 July 1988

Mr M A Harris  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Health  
and Social Security  
Health Services Division  
Hannibal House  
Elephant and Castle  
LONDON SE1 6TE

*Copy Dr Pickles - grateful for your advice*

*Miss Winterton*

*Mr Glaco*

*Dr Moore*

GRO-C:  
Matt

4/7

Dear Mr Harris

Fresh warm blood, untested for HBsAg and  
anti-HIV used at Harefield Hospital

Following your letter to General Managers of 20 January 1986, I am writing to you to state officially my position regarding the use of fresh, warm blood that has not been screened by the National Blood Transfusion Service.

Since I was appointed Director of this Centre, I have had to deal with problems regarding the use of fresh blood by Professor Yacoub. I have expressed to Professor Yacoub on numerous occasions my concern and disapproval of this practise which I consider to be against the best principles of blood transfusion medicine. Unfortunately, Professor Yacoub continues bleeding members of staff, visiting doctors and members of the Armed Forces for his numerous "emergencies". I have told him that I am not prepared to issue from this Centre any more untested blood unless the DHSS is prepared to agree to this. I have added that, in view of the new regulations on Product Liability where blood and blood components are no longer considered a service but a product, the Blood Transfusion Service must comply with the mandatory pre-release testing of blood issued.

We have three cases of HIV infection apparently transmitted by blood transfusion that we have been unable to follow-up fully since the three patients concerned were given, in addition to blood supplied by the Transfusion Service, fresh warm blood collected at Harefield Hospital. We have followed up the donors of the units issued by this Centre but it will be impossible to follow up the donors who gave the fresh blood in view of the poor record keeping by Professor Yacoub's team.

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I am not prepared to continue condoning Professor Yacoub's bad transfusion practise and if he wishes to give unscreened blood to his patients, he will have to obtain blood from sources other than the Blood Transfusion Service. If we continue to supply Professor Yacoub with blood and he persists in using fresh, untested blood in addition to NBTS blood, sooner or later the media will publicise the fact that blood transfusion in the UK can transmit AIDS.

Improperly labelled, empty blood packs have appeared at Harefield Hospital and I know for a fact that the blood in them has been transfused to patients. I also know that members of staff who have given blood have stated that they do not wish their blood to be tested for anti-HIV.

For all the above reasons, I am writing to inform you that I cannot continue supplying the Harefield Hospital with properly screened blood and blood components if Professor Yacoub persists in giving untested blood to some of his patients.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

Dr Marcela Contreras  
Director

Copy to : Dr. H. Gunson