



30th August 1991

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Professor J D Cash
NMSD

Dear John,

HCV: DONATION TESTING: STARTING DATE

Thank you for yours of 29th August. Isn't it interesting that this, the first alleged record of a clear UK policy in this regard, should come to our hands

- indirectly
- unofficially
- and • too late !?

As I said at our Board meeting, we shall require to have much clearer official notification, timeously, in handling similar issues in the future. I shall make it my business to pursue this issue with the ME/Department.

I feel certain that under the circumstances we have indeed taken the best decision available to us. Equally however I'm sure that some important lessons ought now to emerge about how to do things better next time.

It will be of some considerable interest to see if we can stimulate more clarity about:-

- to whom the Advisory Committee on the Virological Safety of Blood provides advice and what status that advice has
- who is thereafter responsible for turning that advice (or amended versions of it) into actual policy, with authority to instruct action and/or inaction
- who is responsible for communicating relevant and authoritative instructions clearly and timeously to the relevant punters at the coal face.

There is for instance as yet no sign whatever that UK Health Ministers' alleged collective endorsement of the idea of a uniform starting date - having failed to achieve any such thing - has even gone as far as achieving a mild admonishment of the culprit who broke ranks.

I remain uncomfortable that we are all most probably in a potentially seriously compromised position with which Dr Metters' unpublished minutes do nothing to assist us.

We are however, as often before (thank goodness) now taking important steps to help ourselves - by reaching clear policy recommendations of our own in the area of future safety developments. The General Manager of the CSA has expressed a particular interest in these development proposals and I am confident that he will be lending us his support when the time comes for our views to be put to the CSA Management

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Committee and to the Management Executive (via whom, hopefully to DoH among others).

As you know it is my belief that thereafter whatever policy decisions are ultimately taken, about what developments are to be progressed and when, should be conveyed to us very formally and very clearly by the relevant authorities in the NHS in Scotland. Where we are and where we are not free to do our own thing should also be made clear. That way we shall all know exactly where we stand.

Clearly it may only be possible to achieve part of what I am looking for here. A certain amount of inherent ambiguity will always be required by civil servants - partly to protect Ministers and partly to protect themselves. I remain convinced however that we can do a lot better next time than we managed, collectively (UK wide), to achieve over HCV.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

David B McIntosh
General Manager

Copy to:

SNBTS Board members
Mr Donald

+ Courtesy copy to Dr H. Gerson (for information)

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