

NATIONAL BLOOD AUTHORITY

MEETING OF RTDS/CHIEF EXECUTIVES/GENERAL MANAGERS

Minutes of the 4th meeting of the above Committee held at NBA Headquarters, Watford on Tuesday 27th July, 1993.

PRESENT: Mr. J.F. Adey (In the chair) Dr. H.L. Lloyd
Dr. F.A. Ala Dr. Elizabeth M. Love
Mr. G.R. Austin Dr. S.M. McDougall
Dr. F.E. Boulton Dr. Vanessa J. Martlew
Dr. Marcela Contreras Mrs. Jill Pengilley
Dr. C.C. Entwistle Ms. Belinda Phipps
Dr. Kathleen M. Forman Dr. E. Angela Robinson
Dr. H.H. Gunson Mr. B.J. Savery
Dr. Jean F. Harrison Col. M.J.G. Thomas
Mr. D. Jinks

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Dr. D. Lee and Dr. W. Wagstaff.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 3rd Meeting held on 26th May 1993 were approved as a true record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Contracts for the purchase of blood packs

Several RTCs reported that they had entered into contracts with Baxter. Others were concerned that if they did not do so it would entail additional cost since there was a consequent loss of discounts.

It was agreed that the monopoly currently held by Baxter should be broken and future policy should encourage at least one other manufacturer to enter the market. At present there were two possible contenders, Biotest/NPBI and Macopharma. It was understood that BPL were addressing the opening of packs from firms other than Baxter and Haemonetics.

The Chairman considered that, in general, contractual arrangements for the purchase of blood packs should be under the control of RTCs although there should be some involvement of the NHS Supplies Authority. He asked members of the Committee to write to him stating their views on how best this could be achieved.

Action RTDs/CEs

3.2 Audit of units receiving bone marrow donors

It was recognised that there was a national aspect to these audits. Dr. Contreras reported that she had sent out a questionnaire to donors in her region to determine how they had been treated. Adverse reports would be followed up.

It was agreed that this was an appropriate way to proceed and Dr. Contreras agreed to circulate the questionnaire to RTCs

Action - Dr. Contreras

4. NBA Chief Executive

4.1 Management consulting

- (i) Mr. Adey introduced this topic saying that the DH had asked the NBA to provide a strategic plan for BPL and the RTCs. The NBA had approved the appointment of Bain and Co., to advise on a strategy for the future. He stressed that consultation with the RTDs/Chief Executives would be extensive and suggested that this could be achieved by holding a series of whole day meetings when emerging proposals could be discussed. The following dates were chosen and in order that an early start could be made they might, with advantage, be preceded with a dinner on the previous evening. The venues will be decided later.

Wednesday 15th September
Wednesday 20th October
Tuesday 16th November
Friday 10th December

- (ii) Dr. Entwistle asked whether the philosophy of employing external consultants was appropriate and Ms. Phipps suggested that the review could be performed by the RTCs. Mr. Adey responded that he did not have the appropriate staff available within the NBA Headquarters to even pilot such a review of management practices within the Service and an external opinion on the strategy would be preferable. This received support.

- (iii) Mr. Paul Rogers and Mr. Mark Hudson of Bain and Co. joined the meeting and Mr. Rogers gave a presentation.

He explained that Bain and Co. were strategy consultants and their work concentrated on organisational aspects, performance and strategies for improvement. They had been involved with Healthcare Sectors in the past but not the NHS.

An outline of the objectives of the NBA project were presented together with a projected timescale. It was the intention to concentrate efforts on BPL between now and October in Phase I of the study. Phase II which would include the long term blood supply strategy and an examination of RTC Infrastructural Design. This should be completed by January 1994 although the analysis of the data would not be completed until March 1994 (Phase III). Proposals for implementation would follow in April/May 1994.

Mr. Rogers explained that discussions had commenced with BPL staff and that the staff of Bain and Co. who were employed on the project would be contacting RTDs/Chief Executives in the near future to arrange a mutually convenient date for an interview. These would be structured so that comparable information could be obtained. Certain statistics were required and where possible these would be obtained from the EIS.

Mr. Rogers and Mr. Hudson left the meeting.

- (iv) Copies of the overhead slides were distributed. Mr. Adey commented that whilst this material was not confidential, premature release to the media may lead to misrepresentation.

- 4.2 Mr. Adey reported that final interviews were to take place for the position of National Public Relations and Donor Services Manager shortly with two candidates who were being recalled after preliminary interviews. It was hoped that an appointment could be made.

5. NBA Director of Finance and Administration

- 5.1 Mr. Savery reported, that he had now visited all RTCs and stated that he had received considerable co-operation with the staff at RTCs and with one exception at RHAs. Plans for the transfer of RTC management and assets to the NBA had been initiated. He would be making further visits later in the year to finalise these arrangements.
- 5.2 The EIS had been transferred from Manchester to NBA Headquarters and would be operated from Watford from now on. Thanks to Maureen King for her work during the past six months were recorded.

Requests were made for the distribution of graphical trends of blood collection and stocks. Dr. Gunson agreed to consult with Mr. Savery.

Action - Dr. Gunson

- 5.3 Gary Barr had been appointed as National IT Manager and Simon Hernaman as his assistant. Sue Healy who had been appointed initially as the telephonist/receptionist was now Mr. Savery's secretary and Abigail Michaels had been appointed as telephonist/receptionist.

Ann Mather had been appointed as Personnel Manager and a Management Accountant was expected to be recruited this week.

6. NBA Medical Director

6.1 UK Advisory Committee on Transfusion Transmitted Diseases

- (i) Considerable concern was expressed about the delay which had occurred by the Department of Health's insistence on deciding whether and when routine anti-HBc should be introduced. Analogies were drawn with the events which had occurred during the past year in France. Dr. Gunson confirmed that he had written to Dr. Metters, Deputy Chief Medical Officer stating that the UK Advisory Committee on Transfusion Transmitted Disease had decided that from a scientific point of view such routine screening is warranted and that the latest series of tests had shown that there are test kits which are satisfactory although all give false positive results.

It was recognised that the UK Advisory Committee on Transfusion Transmitted Diseases is not in a position to decide that the test can be introduced. However, it was agreed unanimously that the NBA should have the authority to make this decision. Dr. Gunson and Mr. Adey would ask the Chairman of the Authority if he would speak to the Minister of Health on this important transfer of policy decisions from the DH to the NBA.

Action Dr. Gunson/Mr. Adey

It was noted that there were other factors which were essential before anti-HBc testing could commence, e.g., a nationally agreed algorithm for testing, the use of confirmatory tests, counselling of donors, amendments to computer programmes. These were currently under examination so that when the decision was made concerning the introduction of tests, there would be a minimum of delay prior to implementation. This would be unlikely to occur before 1994.

- (ii) Dr. Gunson explained that this Committee was being reconstituted as a Standing Advisory Committee for the UK BTS/NIBSC Guidelines.

6.2 RTC/BPL Liaison Committee

(i) Future of the Committee

Dr. Gunson reported that this Committee will stay in existence until Bain and Co. had reported since such liaison would come within their remit. However, as a result of recent EC legislation changes to the plasma specification were necessary. Also, it was important to examine proposals for the opening of plasma packs at BPL. Recommendations on these matters would be made by joint Working Parties involving RTCs and BPL.

This was agreed but adverse comments were made on certain of the EC proposals. Steps would be taken to minimise the effects of these.

(ii) Plasma Supply (Mr. R.C.D. Walker, Chief Executive BPL attended for this item)

Mr. Walker explained that BPL had assessed their future share of the Factor VIII market as 72% compared with the present 70%. He explained that during the current year BPL were fractionating more plasma than the market demand to build up stocks prior to the transfer of high purity Factor VIII production at BPL. During 1994/95 they would not require more than 480 tonnes of normal plasma and with the impending introduction of recombinant Factor VIII (the effect of which was unknown at present) he could not envisage more than 500 - 510 tonnes being required for each of the years 1995/96 and 1996/97.

Several options were discussed.

- to produce more plasma than BPL required and attempt to sell the excess. This may be difficult since the DH insisted that measures should not be taken to create an artificial excess over NHS needs. The advantage of this option would be that donors could be retained on plasmapheresis panels since this was the one procedure whereby plasma was not produced as a result of the provision of cellular components. Dr. Contreras pointed out that plasmapheresis donors acted as a reserve pool for recruitment of platelet donors when demands for platelets rose sharply.

retain highly motivated panel of donors

- to fractionate the excess plasma and sell products surplus to NHS requirements. Mr. Walker said that he could attempt to investigate this possibility but it would take time and could not be guaranteed.

Also, the largest market in Europe, i.e. Germany, was not accessible since they required ALT tests on plasma donations.

- to ask DH if they would finance the plasma excess for 1994/95. Storage of this plasma would be a problem since this was expensive and BPL had little reserve storage for plasma on site. This option would have to be combined with plans for sale of plasma and products.
- to plan for the collection of 480 tonnes of plasma only 1994/95. This would result in a loss of income of approximately £2.5M and this would have to be made up by savings. RTCs were already being asked for efficiency savings and this additional burden would not be easy to accommodate.

It was agreed that RTCs would formulate plans and send these to Mr. Savery.

Actions RTDs/CEs

- (iii) Dr. Gunson drew attention to the fact that changes in tests for virus markers on plasma sent for fractionation could prejudice BPLs product licences since the licence includes a list of tests which are used. A survey of tests used by RTCs was carried out in May 1993 and this has been sent to Dr. Snape. This table will be sent to RTDs/CEs. This should be examined and if there are changes to the tests which are being used these should be communicated to Dr. A. West-Watson, the Regulatory Affairs Manager at BPL. Future changes should be notified to him 2-3 months prior to the change so that a variation order for the product licence can be applied for.

Action - Dr. Gunson

7. Reports from Task Forces

7.1 Donor Registration Card

It was agreed that Dr. Knowles would be invited to attend the next RTD meeting to give a presentation on the work of the Task Force and answer questions. Implementation of use of this card had financial implications and should be deferred until the National Publicity and Donor Services Manager was in post.

Action - Dr. Gunson

7.2 Data Transfer Standards

Mr. Savery commented that he had spoken to Mr. Garwood about the report. There was a concern that the proposals would lock NBA into present technology when this was a rapidly changing field of operations. It was agreed that Mr. Barr would discuss the future actions to be taken with Mr. Garwood. *Make sure we make best use of what we have already got.*

Action - Mr. Savery

7.3 Medical Assessment of Donors

Dr. Gunson reported that following consultations amendments were being made to the questionnaire and the A-Z Guidelines. These should be completed before August 12th when a final meeting of the Task Force would be held. Following this meeting a report and finalised documents would be circulated.

It was suggested by Ms. Phipps that attempts should be made to measure the increased effectiveness of this form of donor assessment. To do this with respect to an estimate of the increased safety of products would be virtually impossible. However, it may be feasible to document those donors who had previously been accepted and were now rejected because additional information had been obtained. This would be considered.

8. Any other business

- 8.1 Dr. Boulton described the problems that had occurred at the Wessex RTC with respect to the development of computer services. After a long history of difficulties, some of which could have been avoided, substantive plans are now in hand for a viable system.
- 8.2 Dr. Contreras asked about the lines of accountability of staff at RTCs and the NBA. Mr. Adey replied that from 1st April 1994 RTDs/CEs would be accountable to him. All staff in RTCs were accountable to the RTD/CE. It was important that other staff at the NBA communicated with staff at RTCs e.g. Business Managers, QA Managers and IT Managers. It was the responsibility of RTDs/CE that they had managerial lines of communication so that they were aware of events and informed of discussions that were taking place.
- 8.3 Mr. Jinks reported that Parkfields was to become a private company. The changeover would not be rapid and customers would be kept informed.
- 8.4 Dr. Contreras reported that they had approached Carlton Television for local advertising to try to improve their blood supplies. Dr. Harrison and Ms. Phipps took note.

8.5 Ms. Phipps asked for information concerning an Organisation known as Blood Call Foundation. Col. Thomas replied that ABSD had worked with them on occasions for the provision of safe blood supplies overseas. He would be able to supply further details upon request.

8.6 Mr. Adey reported that the BBC programme "999" had contacted Dr. Gunson and him with proposals for some BTS activities to be included in their next series. Dr. Gunson had spoken to one of the programme researchers and agreed to discuss this further when the BBC production team had formulated proposals. The series was scheduled for January 1994

9. Place, date and time of next meeting

NBA Headquarters, Wednesday 15th September at 9.00 a.m. with a dinner on the evening of Tuesday 14th September at the Watford Hilton National.