



Public Health Laboratory Service

Public Health Laboratory
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12th May, 1983

Dr. J. Barbara,
North London Blood Transfusion Service,
Deansbrook Road,
Edgware,
Middlesex

Our ref JC/PH

Your ref



Dear John,

SCREENING OF BLOOD DONORS TO REMOVE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION OF THE ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROMS (AIDS)

I enclose a copy of a letter written by the Bureau of Biologics to Plasma Phoresis Donation Stations in the U.S.A. indicating the measures to be followed in screening donors for categories of patients likely to have a high risk of developing AIDS.

From a recent review of the literature I have made, I am doubtful whether the use of a screening test such as HB antibody will detect some patients early enough in the stage of their disease to remove the risk of transmission of infection by transfusion. The key case, which has been published recently in the Lancet, was the child who acquired the disease by blood transfusion from a blood donor who developed symptoms of the disease seven months after donating a pint of blood, which was used as a platelet infusion for this child.

I think it will be worthwhile investigating the possible use of screening tests which might be found to be suitable at a later date, but I think the only effective way will be to use some sort of questionnaire to donors, and to rely on their altruism and honesty with regard to homosexual exposure. I have some copies of a questionnaire which is used by one of the commercial blood product firms in the U.S.A., and can arrange to let you have a copy if you wish. As Harold Gunson is away on holiday, I am writing to you as Secretary of the TAH Working Party as I think this point should be considered as a matter of urgency.

We have a recently identified case, a haemophiliac who has definite AIDS by the CDC criteria. He appears to be in good health at the moment, and it remains to be seen how his disease will progress. Investigations are proceeding into the possible sources of this disease. We are treating this as a suspect case because we have yet no definite evidence of transmission by blood products in the U.K. We plan to prospectively follow all other patients who have been treated with batches of factor VIII concentrate made from American plasma which has been received over the last three years, as the longest incubation period of AIDS reported to CDC Atlanta associated with blood transfusion is 2 years 9 months.

contd/....

They have told me recently that they have eight cases of this sort under investigation.

I think that this matter should be discussed at an early meeting, or possibly at a special Working Party which I know Harold Gunson has in mind to initiate to look into this question.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

J. Craske
Consultant Virologist

cc Dr. H.H. Gunson NBTS M/cr