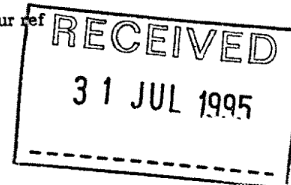


28 July 1995

Public Health Laboratory Service

Central Public Health Laboratory
Virus Reference Division
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Our ref is/pm-direct Your ref



To Directors and Consultant Virologists of PHLS collaborating

with the National Blood Authority in the HCV look-back exercise

Dear

Angela

for your information
best wishes Philip

You will by now be regularly receiving specimens to test for HCV, accompanied by form LBF3. This form should be treated as a request form to test specimens according to the algorithm previously distributed.

I enclose a copy of a letter that Dr Robinson, Medical Director NBA, has sent to Transfusion Centre senior staff. This points to some problems that have arisen which also concern us. Firstly, you will note that PHLS will be well advised to stamp form LBF3 when they return it with their report in order to ensure they will be reimbursed by NBA. Secondly, the pricing negotiated with NBA includes the cost of an anti HBc EIA. It was agreed that this would be done on all recipients of implicated blood tested in the look-back. Please make sure that these tests are done, and where they have not been done arrange with your local Transfusion Centre to do 'catch-up' testing. Thirdly, please stick to the algorithm that was agreed with NBA (refer to me if you are in doubt).

Many recipients will prove to be anti HCV EIA and RIBA positive, but I have some concern about PCR testing of the remainder. Following the recent HCV PCR QC study (report about to be distributed) in which most of the PHLS involved took part I believe there is a possibility of some PCR false negatives arising. This study, though not ideally

organised, reveals the need for rapid processing of specimens for PCR so that degradation of RNA is minimised. New arrangements may be needed locally to achieve this. There may even be a need to re-test recipients whose specimens have not been optimally tested e.g. because of delay in processing. I would be grateful if you would discuss this with your Transfusion Service counterparts to ensure that the PCR element of the HCV lookback exercise is not open to criticism.

Yours sincerely

Philip P Mortimer

enc

Copies to Dr Robinson, NBA
 Dr Walford, HQ
 Dr Ramsay, CDSC
 Ms Soldan, CDSC
 PHLs Birmingham
 Bristol
 Cambridge
 Cardiff
 Leeds
 Manchester
 Newcastle
 Nottingham
 Oxford
 Sheffield