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*From the  
Minister for Health*

- 4 FEB 1991

*Dear Alastair,*

Thank you for your letter of 10 January about treatment for haemophiliacs and also indicative prescribing budgets.

Firstly, I must say that there is no proof to show that AIDS will develop more quickly in HIV positive haemophiliacs as a result of receiving intermediate Factor VIII rather than the more expensive high purity product. Haemophilia Centre Directors are aware that "high purity" Factor VIII is known to have the possibility of carrying a higher risk of producing an inhibitor or antibody to Factor VIII. There is by no means a consensus of opinion from the Haemophilia Centre Directors that imported "high purity" Factor VIII is preferable to intermediate Factor VIII products, such as that produced currently by our own Bio Products Laboratory (BPL). The advantage of the latter is that the plasma always comes from unpaid voluntary donors in this country.

Clinicians are free to prescribe what they consider to be the most appropriate blood product for their patients, in conjunction with local management, who set priorities between new drugs, new equipment, more nurses etc. A disproportionate spend on new, expensive drugs could affect financial allocations elsewhere in the hospital. But we have no reason to believe that greater cost consciousness will mean that haemophiliacs are deprived of expensive products believed by their clinicians to be in their best interests.



Turning to the indicative prescribing scheme, I should point out that we have repeatedly made it clear that GPs who exceed the amount set for their practice in order to meet legitimate clinical need will not be penalised. The family health Services authority (FHSA) will accept prescribing to meet clinical need as entirely justified. We have made every effort to ensure that GPs understand this point. I enclose copies of the working paper "Improving Prescribing" and the quick reference leaflet which explain in detail the operation of the scheme. These documents - which were issued to all GPs on 23 May 1990 - reinforce this very point.

I hope this reply is helpful.

*yours ever*

GRO-C

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY