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# NO CLINICAL SIGNS 14 YEARS AFTER HIV-2 TRANSMISSION VIA BLOOD TRANSFUSION

SIR,—The incubation period from infection to clinical disease with HIV-1 has been assessed by studies on transfused patients for whom the date of infection is known.<sup>1</sup>

Although very few cases of HIV-2 infection have so far been diagnosed<sup>2</sup> the incubation period does seem to be different. A Portuguese man, still alive, was reported with AIDS due to HIV-2 in 1985. It was assumed that he had been infected between 1966 and 1969 in Guinea Bissau, indicating an incubation of 16–19 years.<sup>3</sup> He said that he had been a regular blood donor from 1973 (when he emigrated to France) to 1983. We have been trying to trace recipients and nine have been identified. Four died soon after transfusion, two were lost to follow-up, and three were located. Serum samples from two of these three recipients have now been obtained. They had been transfused with the Portuguese donor's whole blood in July, 1974, and September, 1982. Both are seropositive for HIV-2 by specific western blot and spot tests with specific HIV-1/HIV-2 synthetic peptides (Diagnostics Pasteur, peptides from Genetic Systems\*). With HIV-1 assays, ELISA ('ELAVIA', Diagnostics Pasteur; Abbott second generation) and western blot (DuPont), clear cross-reactivity was observed with the serum from the 1974 recipient whereas the other recipient was negative by ELISA and had only a weak p24 band on western blot.

These two women, born in 1926 and 1929, respectively, had no risk factors for HIV infection other than transfusion. Neither has any clinical manifestation of HIV infection. To our knowledge these are the first published cases of HIV-2 transmission by blood transfusion. The timing of infection is certain (and it confirms the long-standing infection of the Portuguese man). These cases (and others<sup>5,6</sup>) confirm a long incubation period for HIV-2—at least 16 years (1969–85) in the blood donor and 14 years or more in the woman transfused in 1974 who is still symptom-free.

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Aids (medical)  
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