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*From the Minister for Health*

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Sir Philip de Zulueta  
3 Westminster Gardens  
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1 AUGUST 1985

*Dear Sir Philip,*

Thank you for your further letter of 12 June 1985 on introducing blood screening tests for HTLV 111 antibody.

Since I last wrote to you on 5 June 1985, the evaluation work has moved ahead. The first stage of evaluation by the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) should be completed later this month, and this will be followed immediately by the assessment field trials within the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS). Your company has already been invited to comment on the proposed protocol for the NBTS trials, and will very shortly be receiving PHLS's results of their evaluation of your test kit. I have no doubt Abbott will continue its cooperative attitude and constructive approach to this evaluation work.

I do not agree that it would be better to introduce blood donation screening without first evaluating the test kits which are to be used. It is essential to complete the programme of evaluation if we are to have a sensible policy that really does protect the public. We believe that no test should be introduced in the UK until its reliability has been established; the same criteria will be applied to any test kit, regardless of its country of origin. Finally may I refute any suggestion that the introduction of a screening test has been delayed because the first test kits which were marketed were not British in origin.

KENNETH CLARKE

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