

BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY

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Director:
R. S. LANE, MD MRCP FRCPath.

RSL/CW

16th October, 1989.

Dr. A. Rejman,
Department of Health,
Alexander Fleming House,
Elephant and Castle,
London, SE1 6BY

Dear Dr. Rejman,

Immune Markers for Hepatitis C Virus (non-A non-B).

I believe that HCV-testing will be on the agenda for the next meeting of the ACVSB and I would be pleased if you could address the following concerns.

Blood transfusion workers and fractionators alike have been waiting many years for a marker for non-A non-B Hepatitis virus(es). The arrival of the Chiron test has evoked great interest and an almost tacit assumption that it will be universally implemented throughout all the Transfusion Services to diminish the risk of HCV transmission in blood and blood products.

Perhaps individuals with antibody to HCV are potential transmitters and should be excluded from donation, but as yet there is no indication that the presence of antibody to HCV is a marker of infectivity; the parallel with antibody to HB_sAg is obvious.

Regional blood collection centres may be able to exclude donors who are Chiron positive, pending more information about infectivity but the following questions at least need attention by the fractionators and individuals with Regulatory interests.

Will withdrawal of plasma containing HCV antibody from plasma pools diminish the safety of products prepared from these pools, should an element of virus removal depend on immune neutralisation?

Will the introduction of the Chiron test carry implications for ALT testing of donor plasma for fractionation?

I am aware that the information needed is as yet not available to answer the above questions, but they should none the less be discussed so that the information required is defined, and that the advice given by the MCA to the industry takes current concerns in to consideration.

Bearing in mind the problems that have arisen following the introduction of a test for HIV1 antibody by NBTS in relation to fractionation and segregation of plasma stocks, it is desirable that a similar situation is not provoked again.

Might it be appropriate for certain members of the Biological Sub-committee of the MCA, augmented by their experts, to formulate the UK position on HCV testing?

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

R.S. Lane
Director

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