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FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1990 47

Blood Banks to Begin Using New Tests for Hepatitis C Virus

FDA Also Allows AZT Use for Children With AIDS

Associated Press

Blood banks will immediately begin using a newly licensed test to screen donated blood for the hepatitis C virus, the most common serious infection spread by transfusions, according to a statement yesterday by the American Association of Blood Banks, the American Red Cross and the Council of Community Blood Centers.

By some estimates, about 7,500 to 20,000 of the 4 million Americans receiving blood transfusions annually develop acute hepatitis C. Officials said the new test may cut that number of infections by about 50 percent.

Hepatitis C, formerly called hepatitis non-A, non-B, infects between 150,000

and 200,000 Americans annually. Only 5 to 10 percent of these cases are attributed to blood transfusions. Other sources are thought to be shared drug needles and, some studies suggest, sexual relations. The source of at least half of the hepatitis C infections is unknown.

The blood agencies estimated that the new testing will prevent 500 to 5,000 new cases annually of transfusion-associated cirrhosis. The Food and Drug Administration approved the hepatitis C test Wednesday.

Yesterday, the FDA also approved use of the drug AZT to treat children with AIDS. It is the only drug that has been shown to extend the lives of adults with AIDS.

Received from Mr R Ferrup, Washington

please fix to Mark Fuller & Dr A McIntyre
and copy to Dr Regman
Mr Canavan

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