



SCOTTISH NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

Headquarters Unit
Ellen's Glen Road
Edinburgh EH17 7QT
031-664 2317

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JDC/EP

19th July 1983

Dr D B L McClelland
Director
Blood Transfusion Service
Royal Infirmary
EDINBURGH

21 JUL 1983

Dear Brian

Answer AS → 4101 h/c

I've just received the enclosed. It is my intention to put the topic on the Agenda for the next Co-ordinating Group meeting (August 30th) so that we can make a decision with regard to:-

(a) Update on the position with regard to a UK leaflet for distribution to donors;

Update not possible

(b) Agree on method of distribution;

(c) Agree on approach to alteration of your "illness notice".

AS.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

PP John D Cash

Encl.

Copy to:

Miss Corrie
Dr Bell

Dictated by Dr Cash, signed in his absence.

WHY IS A LEAFLET ON AIDS NECESSARY?

Recently there has been considerable publicity in the newspapers, on radio and on television about a new, serious, but rare disease called AIDS. Since AIDS may be transmitted by transfusion of blood and blood products, the National Blood Transfusion Service wants blood donors to have the facts about AIDS.

WHAT IS AIDS?

AIDS is short for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. As its name implies, AIDS destroys the body's immune system which normally protects against infection and other illnesses. A person with the disease is therefore at risk of developing serious infections such as pneumonia, or even cancer. AIDS is probably caused by a virus, but this is not known for certain.

WHO IS AT RISK FROM AIDS?

Most of the information about AIDS has come from the U.S.A. where in the past two years or so approximately 1,450 patients have been found to be suffering from AIDS. Certain groups of people appear to be particularly susceptible; these are:-

- (1) Homosexual men who have many different partners.
- (2) Drug addicts, male and female, using injections.
- (3) Sexual contacts of people suffering from AIDS.

It has also been found in a number of immigrants to the U.S.A. from the island of Haiti.

Patients with AIDS also seem more likely to have suffered at some time from various other diseases such as Hepatitis B, syphilis or other sexually transmitted diseases.

HAS AIDS OCCURRED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

Yes, a few cases have been reported, although nothing like as many as in the U.S.A. No-one knows whether more people in the United Kingdom will develop AIDS and a careful watch is being kept for possible cases.

CAN AIDS BE TRANSMITTED BY TRANSFUSION OF BLOOD AND BLOOD PRODUCTS?

Almost certainly yes. There is only the most remote chance of this happening with ordinary blood transfusions given in hospitals. However, in the U.S.A. about 10 patients suffering from haemophilia, an illness in which the blood will not clot, have developed AIDS. Haemophiliacs are more susceptible to AIDS because they need regular injections of a product called Factor VIII. This is made from plasma obtained from many donors. Should just one of the donors be suffering from AIDS, then the Factor VIII could transmit the disease.

HOW CAN RISKS BE REDUCED?

At present, there is no screening test the Transfusion Service can use to detect people with AIDS. So, until there is and until more is known about this disease, donors are requested not to give blood if they think they might either have the disease or be at risk from it.