

Consultants

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many whole-time equivalent consultants were appointed in each of the last five years as part of the new deal for junior doctors.

Mr. Malone: Our regional task forces report that appointments have been made as follows:

	Posts
1991-92	Nil
1992-93	213
1993-94	191
1994-95—to 30 September 1994	130
Total	534

Hepatitis C

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is doing on hepatitis C.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health is funding through its centrally commissioned research programme a project which is looking at behaviours associated with exposure to hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HIV infections.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the Office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and which is, I understand, funding a number of projects researching into hepatitis C.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department first became aware of the risk of transmission of hepatitis C through blood transfusion products; when blood transfusion products were first screened for hepatitis; and when the blood test for hepatitis C was first available.

Mr. Sackville: It has been known since the 1970s that, despite the introduction of testing for Hepatitis B, some recipients of blood and blood products continued to develop hepatitis which was neither hepatitis A nor hepatitis B—NANB. In 1988 a virus called hepatitis C was reported in scientific literature, which was thought to be the main cause of NANB transfusion associated hepatitis. The first anti-hepatitis C tests were reported in scientific literature in March 1989, but did not become available until later in the year. Expert advice was that these tests should not be introduced because of proven deficiencies. These first tests had a large number of false positive and false negative results and no satisfactory confirmatory tests were available. In due course, the test was improved considerably and also confirmatory tests became available. Routine testing of all blood donations for antibodies for the hepatitis C virus was introduced in September 1991, when the expert advice was that sufficiently reliable tests were available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on any plans she has to compensate patients developing hepatitis C from transfusion of NHS blood products.

Mr. Sackville: The Government have no plans to make

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who holds the job contracts of junior hospital doctors; and if she will make a statement on changes she is planning.

Mr. Malone: The job contracts of registrars and senior registrars are currently held by regional health authorities; those of senior house officers and pre-registration house officers are normally held by their employers, either trusts or health authorities. For information about our plans for the future, I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 9 February, *Official Report*, columns 369-70.

Capital Projects

Sir John Gorsj: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what capital projects have been completed in the London borough of Barnet with a works cost of over £1 million since 1979; and if she will give a brief description of each project.

Mr. Sackville: The figures in the table record national health service capital projects that have been completed within the boundary of the London borough of Barnet with a works cost of over £1 million since 1979, and a brief description.

NHS capital project	Works cost £	Description	Year
Barnet General Hospital	1,482,590	Kitchen and dining	1983-84
Central Public Health Laboratory Service, Colindale	14,620,183	Public health laboratory	1984-85
St. Stephen's Aids Centre	2,097,000	HIV day unit	1988-89
Edgware General Hospital	1,362,200	Pathology department	1988-89
Colindale Psychogeriatric Hospital	2,723,370	Psychogeriatric facilities	1989-90

Acamprosate

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much acamprosate was used in the NHS in 1994; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidelines are in place to regulate the use of acamprosate in the NHS, and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the use of acamprosate in the national health service in 1994 is not available centrally. Acamprosate is not licensed for use in the United Kingdom, although an application for such a licence is currently with the Medicines Control Agency. Before a licence is granted, the Medicines Control Agency will need to be satisfied as to the product's quality, safety and efficacy.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has taken to secure the