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From the Secretary of State for Health

Mr Tony Wilson
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28 November 1997

We met on the 10 September to discuss the issues of compensation for haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C through plasma derived Factor VIII and the provision of recombinant Factor VIII as an alternative treatment. I very much regret that I was unable to get back to you and your colleagues as soon as I had hoped due the complexity of the issues involved. The issue of recombinant Factor VIII has been even further complicated in the interim by our need to address urgently concerns about the overall safety of the blood supply in the context of new variant CJD. I believe that officials have discussed these issues informally with you.

As we discussed at our meeting, I understand the concerns of haemophiliacs and their carers about possible infection from agents known and unknown in plasma derived Factor VIII and I fully appreciate the history in relation to HIV and hepatitis. These are very serious considerations which we would wish to ensure inform any consideration of making the best use of the resources available to provide treatments for those with haemophilia.

In that context we are surprised, as I believe you are also, at the recent press statement of the UK Haemophilia Directors Organisation about the use of recombinant Factor VIII and plasma derived coagulation products sourced from US plasma. This conflicts with the advice from the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the advisory committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transfusion (MSBT) and indeed with that from CPMP which advises the European drug regulatory authority. We share your anxiety about the impact of this advice on the management of people with haemophilia.

I gave a commitment to the Haemophilia Society to give full and careful consideration to the issues relating to hepatitis C and to the provision of





recombinant Factor VIII. That is exactly what we are doing.

I hope I will reply to you fully before Christmas.

Best wishes

GRO-C

FRANK DOBSON