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reference

AD HOC MEETING ON NON-A NON-B HEPATITIS

Council are most grateful to you for agreeing to attend a meeting on the above subject to be held on Monday, 12 February 1979 at 2.30 p.m. in the Council Room at this address.

The Chief Scientist of the Department of Health & Social Security has informed the Council that this subject is being given high priority by the Department. Some batches of a commercial product containing Factor IX have been found to transmit this form of hepatitis to chimpanzees, and as a result the product has not been given a licence. This is causing considerable anxiety from the point of view of the treatment of patients. Also laboratory staff generally are beginning to enquire about laboratory safety, and trials of blood products are becoming difficult to stage because of concern over hepatitis transmission. There are two aspects on which the Department sees a need for further work:

- 1) Research which will identify/characterise the agent carrying non-A non-B hepatitis;
- 2) Studies leading to the development of a test for the organism or its marker.

the copies of 'The Lancet' of 4 March 1978 (pages 459-466) and 21 October 1978 (pages 853-856) appear relevant articles and of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at Bethesda, Maryland, has written as follows in relation to the two specific queries mentioned above:

1) The non-A, non-B agent has not yet been purified from the livers of infected individuals or animals, or from the stool. Most recently it has been reported that the agent has been transmitted to chimpanzees. There is a preliminary report that the non-A non-B agent has been visualized by electron microscopy in the livers of infected chimpanzees. This, however, needs further documentation. While the chimpanzee is a clumsy experimental animal, this will provide new opportunities for characterization of the agent. As with all the hepatitis viruses, non-A non-B has yet to be cultivated.

2) Your second question concerns antigenic markers and diagnostic tests. These are not yet available, because of the negative results listed in the paragraph above.

The meeting on 12 February will consider the whole question of non-A non-B hepatitis and any advice or further action by the Council will depend upon the outcome of the coming meeting.

With renewed thanks for agreeing to attend.

Yours sincerely

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