

EAM Screening

31st May, 1985.

Dr. E. Harris,
Chairman,
Expert Advisory Group on Aids,
D.H.S.S., Hannibal House,
Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY.

Dear Ed,

I am just writing to you to re-inforce the views that I have expressed at the Meeting on 29th May, concerning the rapid introduction of HTLV III antibody screening of blood donors. My anxiety is compounded by the paper from the Middlesex Hospital Group, published this week in the Lancet about the rising prevalence of HTLV III antibody positivity in London. I think that not only haemophiliacs receiving cryoprecipitate but also other groups such as some patients undergoing open-heart surgery or with acute leukaemia etc., could be at a real risk of infection by HTLV III. I therefore think that one or more of the FDA approved tests should be introduced immediately to test donations. Those which test as positive should be discarded and the logistics of re-testing confirmatory testing and donor counselling could then be dealt with as separate issues. I think that donors would readily accept withholding of all positive results as an interim measure because after all, they are themselves potential recipients. I feel that such testing should be implemented immediately in order to preserve confidence in the Blood Transfusion Service and any temporary increase in expense would just have to be borne.

Finally, I think you should know that I plan to submit a letter to the BMJ along these lines.

Yours sincerely

A.L. Bloom.