

## SUBMISSION TO NHS MANAGEMENT BOARD

### SUPPLY OF BLOOD PLASMA TO THE BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY

#### Summary

1. The Management Board is invited to agree to the issue of a [Dear Administrator] letter to Regional Administrators reminding them of Ministers' commitment to self-sufficiency in blood and blood products, and asking RHAs to review their funding arrangements to meet the necessary production targets for the supply of blood plasma.

#### Background

2. In 1982, Ministers decided that to enable the UK to proceed to self-sufficiency in blood and blood products (with significant savings in NHS expenditure on commercial products) there would need to be a major expansion of the capacity of the Blood Products Laboratory (BPL) to process blood plasma into blood products for use in England and Wales. The blood plasma required for the Blood Products Laboratory is collected by the Regional Transfusion Centre (RTCs) in England and Wales by extracting the plasma from donations of wholeblood or by plasmapheresis of selected donors. Scotland and Northern Ireland have collaborated in similar but separate schemes, and have achieved self-sufficiency in blood products.

#### Plasma Procurement Targets

3. Estimates of the foreseeable needs in the late 1980s for blood products (in particular Factor VIII for treatment of haemophilia, and human albumin solution) resulted in calculations that some 435 tonnes per annum of the raw material, fresh frozen plasma, would be needed to be produced by the NBTS to enable the new BPL unit to function to full capacity. The new BPL unit is due to open in January 1986. Because it was realised that the NBTS could not provide a threefold increase in plasma procurement instantaneously in January 1986, a phased increase in plasma collection was proposed so as to reach 435 tonnes by 1988. The increase in collection above 150 tonnes p.a. in the period before January 1986 (which current facilities cannot process) would be stockpiled and used to take up the increased capacity when the new facility comes on stream in January 1986.

#### Regional Targets

4. The increased plasma procurement targets were calculated pro rata for catchment populations within RHAs. Regional Transfusion Directors agreed that they saw no difficulties in finding the extra donors and collecting the donations, provided they were given funding to do so. The problem was explained to Regional Administrators in January 1981 (letter of 18 December 1981 at Annex A) and general agreement in principle was reached. [The economic savings to the NHS using its own manufactured products were clear in the long term, but there was a transition stage when RHAs would have to fund increased plasma procurement before they received the benefit of increased supplies of products back from BPL.]

### Present Position

5. Most RTCs have increased their plasma procurement so as to meet the present capacity of BPL (150 tonnes p.a.) but some have indicated that their RHAs are not prepared to fund a further increase in plasma procurement; other RHAs are more sympathetic but not prepared to make a long-term commitment. (A summary of RTDs views is at Annex B). One or two RHAs would prefer not to achieve self-sufficiency, arguing that it is cheaper for their Regions to meet their limited needs for blood products by purchasing from commercial sources; this is not compatible with decisions on self-sufficiency already taken by Ministers.

6. The Department is thus faced with a situation where Ministers' decision to achieve self-sufficiency, with major re-building at BPL investing over £24 million, is liable to be frustrated by the unwillingness of RHAs to produce the necessary raw materials for the new plant to function.

### Timing

7. It is believed that it is not yet too late for RTDs to expand their plasma procurement programmes in 1985-86 and beyond so as to produce the raw materials in sufficient quantity to avoid embarrassment at a new BPL unit having to work below full capacity. Nevertheless RHAs need to take decisions in the near future if these increased supplies of plasma are to be secured.

### Proposed action

8. The Management Group is asked to approve the issue of a [Dear Administrator] letter to Regional Administrators, asking them to review their funding arrangements for the necessary plasma procurement targets, and to let the Department have their views. Draft [Dear Administrator] letter is at Annex C. Parallel discussions are taking place with the Welsh Office. If the response from RAs is not sufficiently encouraging then it is considered that Ministers will have to be asked to raise the issue with RHA Chairmen.