

Mr Venning

MS(H) 27/5

cc: Dr Harris O/R  
Miss Stuart  
Dr Sibellas  
Dr Steadman  
Mr Clark (S of S office)

HEPATITIS B VACCINE SUBMISSION - DRAFT COVERING MINUTE

1. A submission is attached which seeks decisions from Ministers as to the policy which should be adopted on the use of a new and expensive American vaccine against hepatitis B infection. The manufacturer has recently offered to make sufficient vaccine available to vaccinate up to 100,000 people in the United Kingdom.
2. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) at its meeting on 22 April recommended that the vaccine should be given to certain defined groups of people. Many of the groups are NHS staff, and the availability of the vaccine will be a sensitive issue for them as well as for the medical profession in general. There are considerable resource implications in implementing the JCVI recommendations.
3. Paragraphs 14 and 15 of the submission set out the main options and the Departments recommendation. In view of the high cost of the vaccine in relation to the prevention of serious cases of the disease and of difficulties of ensuring that the available supplies are used for those with the highest priority, it is not thought that it has a strong claim for scarce NHS resources. However the vaccine has been licensed for use and will be available on prescription if the manufacturer decides to make it generally available in this country. It is suggested that the agreement of the manufacturer be sought to limit the quantity and distribution of the vaccine in order to contain the cost and to ensure that it is used only for the high priority groups.

GRO-C

26 May 1982

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PS: MS(H) may like to discuss before the meeting between Secretary of State and Mr Horam.

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