



CENTRAL BLOOD LABORATORIES AUTHORITY

Chairman:
R. D. SMART, C.B.E

Chief Executive:
BERNARD J. CROWLEY

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Dr. Pickles
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G. A. Hart Esq CB
Department of Health
Richmond House,
79 Whitehall,
London SW1A 2NS

20th October 1988.

Dear Graham,

Further to your letter of 4th October, which I acknowledged by telephone, I have now received a letter from Bernard Crowley, the Chief Executive of CBLA, reporting on the investigations which I asked him to undertake. Subsequent enquiries have confirmed my view that his report, of which I enclose a copy with this letter, is balanced, fair and objective and I propose taking it as a definitive document in dealing with what have undoubtedly been most seriously misleading inaccuracies emanating from the Blood Products Laboratory. This is a matter of grave concern and regret to the Authority and one which I shall ask the full Authority to consider further at its next meeting.

Enquiries reveal that there has been a laxity of definition of quoted weights of plasma which has caused misapprehensions, both of stock figures and of yields, to the Authority, to the Department of Health and to Regional Transfusion Directors; the apologies of all those concerned are due, or have already been expressed, to all external bodies affected by the errors.

While I am satisfied that the errors did not arise from any deliberate attempt to mislead, it is nevertheless the responsibility of those conducting the operations of a major manufacturing unit controlled by the Authority to verify and stand by any figures which they issue, both internally and to any other part of the National Health Service. With this in mind there is no escaping the conclusion that a burden of responsibility rests on Dr Richard Lane, the Director of the Blood Products Laboratory, since the misleading figures, albeit provided by members of his staff, have been issued with his imprimatur.

I shall therefore ask the Members of the Authority to consider, at the November meeting, what action is appropriate to the situation. In my view there are only two alternatives:-

- 1) That Dr Lane be summarily discharged.
- or 2) That Dr Lane be reprimanded with appropriate severity and formally put on notice that any future lapse of comparable gravity will be taken as grounds for immediate dismissal.

I must admit that I believe the former course to be attended by potential

difficulties, both legal and administrative Dr Lane is possessed of

considerable hubris, which endears him little to his peers. Notwithstanding this, there can be no doubt at all that he combines a very deep knowledge of clinical and laboratory haematology with a fundamental comprehension and experience of the technology and practice of blood fractionation which are together almost certainly unique in this country today. His removal from the Blood Products Laboratory would assuredly handicap the Authority's agreed objective of achieving self-sufficiency in blood products for the NHS at the earliest possible date. I believe that the Members of the Authority would unanimously subscribe to the view that Dr Lane is totally dedicated to the furtherance of the interests of the National Blood Transfusion Service and that without his vision and enthusiasm the new factory at Elstree would never have come into existence in its present form.

In advance of the November meeting of the Authority all the steps outlined by the Chief Executive in his letter are being implemented. I have asked that particular attention be paid to improving yields since this is the one recommendation which, although not easily or quickly achievable, can actually increase the supplies of Factor 8Y available to the Haemophilia Centres.

I am extremely sorry that a situation requiring your personal intervention should have arisen and assure you that no effort will be spared to redress the errors which have occurred and to achieve all of our original objectives at the earliest possible date.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

R D SMART