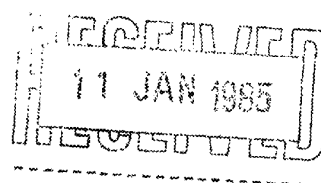


DBLMCC/JD 29/14 1/23/1

8th January 1985



Mr C Madden  
Wellcome Foundation Ltd  
Temple Hill  
Dartford  
Kent DA1 5AH

Dear Mr. Madden,

Screening Tests for Protection of Antibody to HTV - III

In the absence of Dr John Cash who is presently on sick leave, I am writing to you on behalf of the Regional Transfusion Directors in Scotland to ask if you are in a position to give any encouragement about the likely availability of some form of HTLVIII antibody test in the near future. This has been a matter of great concern to us, as to all transfusion people, since the significance of positive antibody testing began to emerge almost a year ago. We were very encouraged by the news that a viral isolate and cell culture system suitable for the production of antigen for assay development had been produced in the UK. This led to optimism that some form of antibody screening test would be available in the fairly near future.

However, I am not reassured by the information available to me at present. Following a meeting in the DHSS before Christmas, chaired by Dr Abrams, I spoke at length to Professor Robin Weiss and it seemed very clear from this discussion that materials for routine screening of blood donors could not be made available by him or his scientific co-worker. My understanding was that arrangements were in hand for the provision of assays either through CAMR or a commercial concern.

I am concerned at the apparent lack of progress and I sincerely hope that you can reassure me that Wellcome will shortly be in a position to make some form of antibody detection system available. I feel certain that I am speaking not only for my Scottish colleagues but for other Regional Transfusion Directors in the UK if I say that it would be a tremendous step forward if even a limited supply of materials for HTLVIII antibody testing were to be made available in the near future. This would make it possible to begin screening of certain particularly important groups of donors. If such limited screening was well planned, it could make a very significant contribution to increasing the safety of transfusion and also provide extremely valuable experience which could be put to good effect in the development of a large scale, comprehensive screening programme.

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Mr c Madden, Wellcome Foundation, Dartford

8th January 1985

I would emphasise that in my own Centre at least, we would be very prepared to use, in the interim, some form of test procedure which might be considered less than satisfactory for a large scale, long term screening programme.

I really cannot over emphasise the urgency of this situation. I am sure that from the recent press coverage, you can be under no doubt of the extreme pressure being placed on the transfusion services to ensure that no "high risk donors" donate blood - a task which is essentially quite impossible unless some form of screening test is available.

If I can provide any more information about the nature of the requirements in the transfusion service here, I would be only too happy to talk to you or any of your colleagues.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

D B L McClelland  
Director

cc Dr C S Corker  
cc Mr I Cayzer

sc Dr J D Cash