

Dr Metters DCMO

From : Ann Towner CA OPU2
Date : 22 May 1996
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HEPATITIS C AND CMO'S MEDICAL GROUP MEETING

1. In his absence from the office, Paul Pudlo has asked me to respond to the request addressed to CA OPU in paragraph 9 of your minute of 21 May to Dr Bourdillon.
2. I attach summaries of the public commitments I have been able to trace which refer to the provision of treatment for patients infected with hepatitis C. Key words are highlighted in bold type.
3. In debates and PQs specifically on the lookback exercise (I. appended), we have always been careful to say "and, where appropriate, treatment". I have included at II extracts from HSG(9)23 and PL CMO (95)1, since these are also in the public domain, although not emanating directly from Ministers. The guidance presumed that all those identified would be tested. The predominant wording was that those infected would "if necessary" be treated. More detailed guidance there on follow up action described the treatment possibilities but avoided any firm commitment to treat all patients - or particular groups of patients.
3. The question of treatment with alpha interferon has been raised in debates on compensation for haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C through blood products. Relevant excerpts from Ministers responses then are at III attached. As replies were not specifically limited to haemophiliacs they might be regarded as relevant also to transfusion cases. In the July 1995 debate Ministers said they would see what they could do to see that "treatment (with alpha interferon) promised was provided", but in December 1995 they qualified this by saying that alpha interferon should be available for those "who could benefit from it".

4. In summary, the commitment given has been to provide treatment where appropriate (or necessary). There has been no firm commitment to provide treatment - as distinct from referral for specialist opinion - in every case.

5. I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you wish me to check anything further.

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