

HEALTH PROTECTION DIVISIONAL UPDATE

28 October 2004

GENERAL HEALTH PROTECTION BRANCH

BLOOD POLICY – Richard Gutowski/Zubeda Seedat

vCJD and Blood Transfusion

The Blood Service's summary Contingency Plan for managing blood shortages was published on the DH website in July. We have been working with the NBS to produce a longer version of the plan. Work is progressing on this. A draft report is currently under consideration.

MSBT met on 12 October. The vCJD transmission risks from donated bone and tissues was discussed following a report back from the MSBT subgroup, which had been addressing this issue. MSBT endorsed that two further subgroups should be set up to consider the issues surrounding vCJD testing of cadaveric donors and a subgroup to consider issues surrounding bone processing. The Bone and Tissues subgroup will meet again to progress work in other areas: ie. possible importation of tissues, and the potential use of synthetic substitutes.

There was discussion on whether individuals who had received a blood transfusion should be excluded from donating bone. The Sub-Groups recommendation was that more work would need to be undertaken to establish the impact of excluding those who received a blood transfusion after 1980. A submission has been sent to CMO to update him on the outcome of the discussions at MSBT.

A small working group of those with an interest in Better Use of Blood have been meeting to take the new strategy document forward – we will need to engage Delivery colleagues in the Department as well as representatives from Trusts. Work is progressing well. A more detailed note of work in progress is in preparation.

Blood stock levels remain healthy at about 9 days supply.

Hepatitis C Ex-Gratia Payment Scheme/ Skipton Fund

1,960 stage one payments have been made. The Skipton Fund has now started to make stage two payments (for people who have developed the 'advanced stage' of illness. We are in discussion with the NHS Appointments Panel about setting up an Appals Panel and Appointing Directors to the Fund.

The issue continues to generate parliamentary interest with 10 PQ's tabled on the Skipton Fund

Shredding of Lord Owen's Papers/Call for a Public Enquiry

Following our meeting with PS(PH), the consultant has now produced a first draft of the report, which concludes that the Department acted reasonably at the time in terms of known infectivity of blood. This reinforces our position that a public enquiry is not warranted. A submission is in preparation for PS(PH) on handling and making the results of the analysis of the papers public, particularly the loss of Lord Owen's papers.

Review of BPL

Work is continuing on this but is moving very slowly. There was a meeting of the Steering Group on 27 September where it was decided to pursue either selling BPL or keeping it under tighter control within the Department. A submission will need to be prepared for PS(PH).

Blood Products Directive

Work is finally progressing on transposition. Meetings are taking place with stakeholders on key areas such as licensing of blood establishments, accreditation of hospital blood banks, receipt and analysis of adverse incident reports, enforcement. We have agreed with the Devolved Administrations that the Competent Authority will act on behalf of the whole of the UK. The draft Regulations have now been produced and draft submission, RIA and public consultation document have been circulated for internal comment. You formally requested MHRA to take on the role of the Competent Authority on an interim basis pending the establishment of the Regulatory Authority for Tissues, which will eventually take on this role when established. They refused and we are pursuing it further with them.

Merger of NBA and UK Transplant

An Implementation Steering Group (ISG) has been set up to oversee the abolition of the NBA and UKT and to create a new organisation. The ISG met again on 20 October to consider options for merging NBA and UKT in line with the ALB Review recommendations. In approaching this task it agreed the approach should ensure continuity of business, be fair and seen to be fair, and could be implemented as quickly as possible. NBA and UKT also made recommendations on a new name for the new authority (NHS Blood and Transplant) and a Board structure. A paper setting out proposals has been sent to NBA and UK T to share with their Board.