

10 G.F.S

NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE



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Dear Colleague,

Hepatitis C Antibody Testing

As you know laboratory tests for antibodies to the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) have recently been developed, and are now sufficiently sophisticated to be put to large scale use. Because this form of hepatitis can be transmitted by blood transfusion (it is thought that about 5% of HCV infections are transfusion-related) the National Blood Transfusion Service will, from September 1st 1991, be testing all blood donated. Donations found to be initially anti HCV positive (perhaps 1 in 200, or approximately 800 in the first year) will be tested further, and we estimate that 70 - 80 donors will be "confirmed positives" in the first year in the North East Thames Region. (We expect the numbers detected to drop after the first year, as we will then be picking up largely newly enrolled donors).

We will be informing donors whose tests are confirmed as positive - largely because we feel that this information should be known to the donor and his/her doctor, and also because we will have to withdraw these donors from our panel. We feel that the donor's General Practitioner is in a far better position to advise him or her than a previously unknown doctor at the Transfusion Centre.

Furthermore, it would obviously be inappropriate for BTC staff to initiate any long term investigation or treatment (were this to prove necessary) without your involvement. For this reason, we plan to ask the donor's consent to inform his/her General Practitioner of our findings.

We have obtained advice from Dr Murray-Lyon (Consultant Physician at Charing Cross Hospital) and Dr Dusheiko (Consultant Physician at the Royal Free Hospital) who have kindly offered to see and advise any patients whom you (or your local gastroenterologist) might wish to refer to them. Obviously, local specialists also are very much aware of this problem and know that testing of all blood donors is imminent.

I enclose the most up-to-date information about Hepatitis C which we have available - I hope that we will be able to update this as further facts emerge from the many research groups round the world. Also enclosed are some recommendations for investigating any of your patients who are found to have a confirmed positive HCV antibody test, and some notes which may assist you in answering the queries your patients may have. A copy of information about Hepatitis C which is being given to all blood donors is also enclosed for information.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the doctors at the Regional Transfusion Centre if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

Jean F Harrison
Director

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