



The Royal Free Hampstead
NHS Trust

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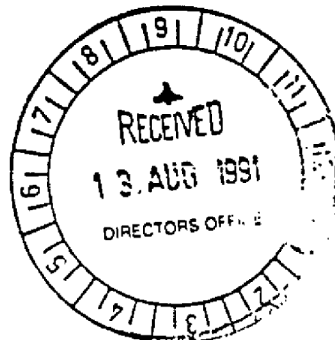
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UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

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The Editor
The Independent
40 City Road
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Dear Sir

In his article on hepatitis C on Wednesday, 7 August Simon Denison quoted several remarks of mine on the testing of donor blood for evidence of this infection. I was not aware that my remarks would be included in an article on the possible legal aspects of failure to test. Some of my remarks had been made 'off the record', and reflected a purely clinical perspective. I did not wish to criticize the Blood Transfusion Service, which in this country is an excellent organization. As soon as the test for hepatitis C became available I thought that it should have been national policy to screen donor blood. But, I also pointed out that there were arguments against screening using the original test. The article failed to quote these arguments.

Most cases of hepatitis C in the United Kingdom are not spread by blood transfusion, but are acquired by intravenous drug abuse, or spread within the community. In some patients, cirrhosis may develop, but in others the disease is relatively benign. The Blood Transfusion Service gave much thought and effort to this problem, and has done a valuable job in evaluating new methods of screening blood donors, given that the currently available screening tests have a high rate of false positive results. A workable system of screening has now been set in place, and it is my opinion that the BTS has rendered a socially responsible service to the community.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

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