

NATIONAL BLOOD AUTHORITY ISSUES
RECALL NOTICE ON PLASMA PRODUCTS



News release

30 October 1997

Following instructions received from the Medicines Control Agency (MCA), based upon a new recommendation by the Committee on Proprietary Medicinal Products (CPMP), the National Blood Authority has today initiated a recall of plasma products (Albumin and Factor VIII) from 26 distribution sites in England.

CPMP has recommended that there should be a recall of batches of blood products if a blood donation to a plasma pool was found to have been made from a person who developed nvCJD. It has now been established that plasma from a donor, who subsequently developed nvCJD, contributed to this batch of blood products.

Dr Angela Robinson, NBA Medical Director, said: "The recall is purely a precautionary measure since there is no epidemiological evidence to suggest that CJD can be transmitted between humans through blood transfusions or the use of blood products.

"As the Department of Health's Chief Medical Officer stated recently blood and blood products are only given to patients who have a serious clinical - and in many cases very urgent - need for them as part of their clinical care. Any negligible risk of nvCJD transmission is therefore heavily outweighed by the immediate benefit to the patient of the medical treatment which, in many cases, will be lifesaving."

As well as ongoing research on transmissibility and diagnostic tests, strict blood donor selection criteria are used to exclude potential donors who may be at risk of developing CJD.

Dr Robinson added: "There is absolutely no risk whatsoever of contracting CJD or any other such condition through giving blood and we would like to thank donors for their lifesaving gift."

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Editors:

- Albumin is used in the treatment of burns, shock and chronic liver disease. Factor VIII is used in the treatment of haemophilia.
- nvCJD was first identified by the CJD Surveillance Unit in 1996. It appears to affect a younger group of patients than classic CJD and displays different clinical features (for example, a longer duration of illness and behavioural changes).
- There have been 22 confirmed cases of nvCJD in the UK to date.
- The CJD Surveillance Unit continues to monitor all suspected cases of CJD.
- The Government has allocated some £68 million over the next three years for CJD research, including further studies of the transmissibility of nvCJD and the development of early screening tests.

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