

Dr V King
Communicable Diseases Branch
Department of Health
Wellington House
135-155 Waterloo Road
LONDON
SE1 8UG

19th June 1997
LS/june/ppm-vk

Dear Vicki,

UK Transmission of HIV 1 by Window Phase Blood Donation

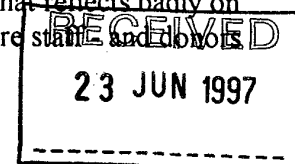
Thank you for your helpful comments on the above.

We have, in response, prepared another draft which we enclose. We have removed the reference to 'more vigorous self-exclusion procedures' which is anyway perhaps too vague to be helpful. As suggested by Vanessa Martlew, we have also changed parts of the text which might have identified the index case. We have, in addition, included a reference to the DoH/NBS Donor Leaflet which communicates self exclusion criteria to donors.

We, too, are aware of the extremely low detection rate of HIV p24Ag positive/anti-HIV negative donations in the US, but we are unable to quote figures without, at very least, a personal communication from those responsible for monitoring that screening. We are going to great lengths to get hard data on US experience of p24Ag screening and if, we succeed, we will add this information to the paper. We have changed the text on page 2 to refer in more general terms to the donor knowing that he was in a risk group according to the leaflet - that is the significant point. It would be clumsy not to refer to the donor as 'he'. Do you think that matters? If so, it will have to be 'they'.

We have added a short paragraph to the text returning to the essential point of the letter, which is that the leaflet, and the advice to donors it enshrines, is of great importance, as no laboratory test will infallibly remove the risk of HIV transmission to recipients.

We are disappointed that possible legal action locally should be seen as a justification for delaying publication. This event is already in the public domain, having been referred to in the national lay and medical press. We are providing a factual, anonymous account of the HIV transmissions, and we don't believe there is anything in the letter that reflects badly on the services provided to the patients involved in this incident. Health care staff and donors - need to learn from it and this letter gives them that opportunity.



The transfusions that we want to report took place nearly a year ago. We think it is high time to emphasise the importance of donor self-exclusion and the possible consequence of failures in it, which we suspect are quite common.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

Dr Philip P Mortimer

GRO-C

Dr John V Parry

cc Professor Tony Hart, University of Liverpool
Dr Angela Robinson, National Blood Authority, Watford
Dr Vanessa Martlew, Liverpool Blood Centre

P.S. We will send a fair copy of the phylogenetic tree (figure 1) shortly.