

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW



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GDOL/DM

8 January 1985

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE
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HAEMOPHILIA UNIT

Enclosure 66.

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CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

As you may know, there has been recent publicity in the newspapers and television concerning an increased risk of the disease known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in haemophiliacs who have received treatment with clotting factor concentrates.

In recent months, it has been recognised that AIDS is caused by a newly-discovered virus. The increased risk of AIDS in haemophiliacs is probably due to transmission of this virus from certain blood donors by clotting factor concentrates. The virus can also be transmitted by sexual intercourse, particularly between homosexuals, but also sometimes by male-female intercourse.

The risk of the disease, AIDS, in haemophiliacs appears to be very small and less than the risks of bleeding. We therefore recommend that you should continue treatment with clotting factor concentrates. Several steps have been taken to reduce the risk of viruses in the clotting factor concentrates:-

- 1) All blood donors discovered to be at risk of AIDS are being excluded from blood donation.
- 2) All Scottish factor eight concentrate is now heat-treated to destroy the virus.

We do not yet have a blood test for the virus particle, but hope to have this within the next few months. However, we and other haemophilia centres do now have a blood test for antibody to the virus. If this antibody test is positive, this means that the person has been exposed at some time to virus particles. A positive test does not mean that the person will develop AIDS. Recent studies in England have found that about half of regularly treated haemophiliacs have positive antibody tests. We have recently tested stored blood samples from many of our patients, of whom about 10% have positive antibody tests. The reason why fewer Scottish patients have positive tests compared to English patients is probably due to the fact that we have largely used Scottish concentrate in recent years rather than concentrate from the USA.

We are writing to you now for three reasons:-

Firstly, we enclose an appointment to see you. It is important that we take a blood sample from you for the virus tests, so that we can monitor

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virus exposure in all our patients who have received factor concentrates. We would also like to perform some skin tests which measure the body's defences against infections. At the same time we will be very happy to give further information and to answer any questions you may have about the virus and the tests.

Secondly, we recommend as of now that all haemophiliacs who have received concentrates should take certain simple precautions to reduce the small possibility that the virus may be transmitted to other persons:-

- (a) if possible, you yourself should make up and handle your own concentrate. Great care must be taken not to contaminate work surfaces with spilled concentrate. Plastic sheets will now be provided. All spillages should be mopped up with "Milton". Care must be taken with all used needles, syringes and bottles which should be put into the rigid "Cinbin" and returned for disposal in the centre. Plastic sheets should also be returned, in plastic bags which will now be provided. If anyone in the family wishes to help they should wear gloves which will now be provided and disposable plastic aprons, which should be returned in the plastic bags. You and any assistants should wash your hands carefully afterwards. Any assistant who pricks themselves with a used needle should contact the Haemophilia Centre at once (to arrange an injection to prevent hepatitis).
- (b) As sexual intercourse has been shown to be involved in the spread of the disease, the wearing over the penis of a contraceptive sheath (these may be provided) is recommended, and this should be flushed down the toilet after use. We suggest that you do not use rectal or oral intercourse since the risk of virus transmission may be higher than vaginal intercourse. Also if you wish to consider having a family you should discuss this with us in advance.
- (c) You and all relatives in close contact should refrain from giving blood donations until further notice.
- (d) Dental care may also have to be reorganised and further advice will be given about this.

It is to be EMPHASISED that these are only simple precautions for you and your family. No changes need occur in your day-to-day life with friends, neighbours, at school or at work.

Thirdly, we realise that your wife/other family members/sexual partner(s) may be concerned about the possibility that they may be exposed to the virus.

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We will be very happy to talk with them about such concerns. Please bring them along with you if you would like us to do this.

If the enclosed appointment is unsuitable, please ring Sister Campbell (Extension GRO-C) for another one.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

DR G D O LOWE

GRO-C

DR C D FORBES

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