



previous papers for reference

LIE 20

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From the Secretary of State for Health

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The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP

15 JUN 1995

*D. Kenneth*

Thank you for your letter of 24 May enclosing one from your constituent Dr **GRO-A** of **GRO-A** about the look back exercise to trace people who may have been infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) through blood or blood products.

As you may know, the start of the look back procedure was announced on Tuesday 4 April. Detailed procedures for the look back were issued under cover of the Chief Medical Officer's letter of 3 April to all doctors. I enclose a copy for your information. As you will see, previous donations from any donor shown to have been HCV positive since screening was introduced are the subject of the look back. The previous donations in many cases will be before 1989 and so the look back is not limited to 1989.

Donations made prior to the introduction of screening and where no further donations by those donors have been made since then are more complex. However, consideration is being given to whether sufficient information is available and what action may be appropriate.

As Dr **GRO-A** states in his letter, only some patients appear to benefit from the use of Interferon. Much research has been done and is continuing to be done to see how to identify those patients who will respond, when to start treatment and whether indeed the infection is eliminated or whether there is only a reduction in concentration of the virus.

The decision to introduce the look back followed a pilot scheme which showed that this was feasible, as well as the fact that a potential treatment had been licensed in the UK (November 1994). Dr **GRO-A** will be aware that many other countries have not introduced hepatitis C look back.

I hope this is helpful.

*Virginia Bottomley*

**GRO-C**

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY

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