Thursday 21 December 2000
Written Answer
Tuesday 13 February 2001

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BLOOD PRODUCTS

N121 Mr Jim Cousins (La. Newcastle upon Tyne Central):

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if it is his policy that user-patients should be informed if the Bio Products Laboratory withdraws blood products on the basis of past donation information relating to CJD protection requirements. (143857)

MS COOPER

[holding answer 21 December 2000]:

The Department's current guidance, based on the advice from ethical experts, is that clinicians should not tell patients if they have received such products. This is because:

- the risk that vCJD might be transmitted in this way is low;
- there is no diagnostic test for vCJD
- even if a test was available, there is no treatment.

The guidance goes on to state that:

"In deciding whether or not to inform a particular patient, the benefit/harm balance for their individual situation must be carefully considered. In communicating with patients who have received implicated products, it is therefore for individual clinicians to decide whether to follow this general ethical advice."

The Department is continuously reviewing this advice to ensure that it is line with current scientific information and ethical thinking.