

Monday 29 July 2002

PQ11155 /2001/2002

Written Answer

Han Ref: Vol  
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Havard, Da (Lab Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney):

Mr Dai Havard (Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney): To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what estimate he has made of the number of blood donors who will be removed from the blood donor base if recipients of blood are banned from donating blood. (73931).

#### **SUGGESTED REPLY**

The National Blood Service estimates that approximately 135,000 (7.7%) to 255,000 (14.5%) of blood donors would be removed from the donor base if it was decided to exclude donors who had previously received a blood transfusion, as a precautionary measure to minimise the theoretical risk of transmitting vCJD through blood. The Government's expert advisory committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation is currently considering this along with other possible vCJD risk reduction measures.

**Background**

1. Dai Havard MP has asked a number of PQs in the last year relating to alternatives to blood transfusion. He is particularly concerned that patients are made aware that alternatives exist and that they are given a choice. He is concerned that alternatives should be more widely used and in particular is advocating greater use of the drug erythropoietin (rather than blood transfusion) for cancer patients with chronic anaemia.
2. The Government with the National Blood Service are currently working on contingency plans related to the screening of blood donors for vCJD and the impact this could have on the blood supply. There is no definitive evidence that vCJD can be transmitted by blood.
3. MSBT will consider the risk assessment by EOR together with work carried out by the National Blood Service to estimate the impact of excluding transfused recipients on available supplies of blood at their next meeting on 22 October 2002.