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27th May 1991

STRICTLY PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Dr W Whitrow
Dr S J Urbaniak
Dr E Brookes
Dr D B L McClelland
Dr R Mitchell

Dear

HIV +VE NON-HAEMOPHILIAC PATIENTS ALLEGEDLY INFECTED BY TRANSFUSION

You will have noticed the Press exposure of this issue, and also perhaps last week's BBC coverage on Reporting Scotland in peak viewing time.

One imagines that there is bound to be more of the same. Both for the normal general good reasons and also in particular because at least one Health Authority spokesman in the South has made **very** misleading statements in this connection, I would like us to have a clear and united front here in Scotland.

This is one of those quite harrowingly difficult issues to handle well, either at a personal level or corporately. In view of its possible repercussions however we quite simply **have to get it right.**

I'd like to suggest that we deal with it - as usual - within two quite separate "envelopes":-

1. **Personally/Professionally** - each according to his/her conscience making it absolutely clear when views expressed are in this category and **not on behalf of the organisation.** In this area I would warmly endorse the value of silence but must leave decisions to individuals provided always of course that what is said does not bring the Service into disrepute.

2. **Corporately/Organisationally** - with everyone authorised to speak on behalf of the SNBTS doing so within agreed guidelines and according to official SNBTS policy.

   In the formal corporate context I believe that the following would be appropriate.

2.1 No one should comment on the cases raised - either individually or collectively - on the grounds that they are within or very close to the legal system. We should not and must not comment on matters shortly to come before the courts.

2.2 Authorised spokespersons asked about RTC product safety should comment positively in the usual terms, e.g.

   o Our donor selection and our screening procedures are carefully designed and carried out to minimise risk to patients and to enhance safety. There is of course no risk to the donors

themselves.

- o In addition, every donation is subjected to rigorous testing procedures to maximise product safety.

- o The SNBTS conforms to the high safety standards laid down for all transfusion services in the UK.

- o All safety procedures, including virus testing, are kept under constant review with updating and improvement carried out as proven scientific advances make this possible.

2.3 In matters of this importance official comment should be restricted to RTDs and their DSMs/RDOs only, but other key staff should be carefully briefed so that questions from donors and members of the general public can be fielded confidently.

If colleagues agree with the above, and in the absence of further comments from the copyees this will become firm policy. Please do however let me know if you would wish to see any changes made.

Yours sincerely

David B McIntosh
General Manager

Copy to:
Board members not listed above
Mr Donald, General Manager, CSA
Mr Ranald Macdonald, CLO, CSA
Mr R Panton, Management Executive (for information)