

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FVIII

I spoke to _____ He expressed great surprise at the report in 'The Times' about Biogen.

The 'Cloner' at Biogen is a whizz-kid ex _____ who left to go to Biogen, taking his _____

As recently as 2 months ago _____ was in contact with him at which time he appeared totally unfamiliar with FVIII and its properties and, indeed, _____ agreed to have a meeting with him to see what assistance the Professor's unit could give Biogen in the first step towards genetically engineering FVIII ie the purification of FVIIIIC.

_____ thinks that Genentech may be ahead of the field. They have access to highly purified FVIIIIC produced by the Royal Free team. Apparently Genentech now owns the RF method and Speywood has signed a collaboration agreement with Genentech in relation to genetic engineering of FVIII.

_____ will be ready to answer questions at the CBLA meeting on 3 December but feels unable to predict the timescale of developments in this field.

I also spoke to _____ who feels that nothing has happened which would significantly change the picture since the Project Steering Group first considered genetic engineering and that, provided there are no unacceptable delays in redeveloping BPL, _____ economic appraisal would still be valid. He considers that problems of large scale manufacture and purification of genetically engineered material are likely to be so great that production by this method is likely to be expensive. In the case, say, of albumin, the costs might be of the same order as for blood fractionation. Since albumin derived from blood does not transmit hepatitis and since albumin genetically engineered in bacteria could contain various bacteria-derived undesirables, the blood-derived albumin could still be the better option.

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STOP PRESS

_____ has just telephoned. Biogen itself apparently denies that it is near producing FVIII - it only wishes it were! The story in 'The Times' was completely garbled and wrong, apparently. However, I think there is a valuable spin-off from the story in that it should prompt the CBLA into examining its proposed investment in the light of current developments in genetic engineering. I feel that the sooner this exercise is done the better in order to reassure our financial colleagues and the Treasury - otherwise each new reported 'break-through' will have them rushing to cancel the cheques!