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Reference.....

BLH/1 VOL 5

2407

AMERICAN FACTOR VIII

You will wish to know that our in Blood Transfusion, has received information from the American Bureau of Biologics via at NIBSC that there may be considerable publicity in the next couple of weeks concerning the safety of American Factor VIII.

Please forgive the layman's explanation below - I hope it makes some sense. Apparently some research is about to be published showing fairly conclusively that plasma taken from homosexual drug-takers contains a sort of virus which goes undetected when the plasma is tested because it is suppressed by the drugs. However, when used for Factor VIII, it becomes active again. It seems that 400 haemophiliacs in the USA have exhibited signs of the virus. The report is expected to be picked up by the lay press and may cause a furor. I do not know which brands of Factor VIII are involved.

From the DHSS point of view, we can defend the National Blood Transfusion Service's own record. Someone taking drugs (gay or not) would not be bled provided that the injection marks showed. In any case with our voluntary unpaid donor system we do not have the same problem as in the States where drug addicts are tempted to give blood simply for the money. However, about half of the Factor VIII bought from commercial companies is imported from the USA. Your Division, when the published study is available - I understand that one of your Sections scans the technical literature for such material - may have to consider revoking licences of certain manufacturers. Of course it may turn out that none of the Factor VIII involved is supplied to this country.

I do not think that has any more information at this time, but if you wish to speak to him - if only to clarify my explanation of the virus! - he can be reached at

I would be grateful if you could keep me in touch with developments.

HS1A
Room 1208, Hannibal House

16 July 1982

cc: