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## HEPATITIS C AND BLOOD TRANSFUSION IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service today welcomed the announcement by the UK Departments of Health of a "look-back" programme to trace patients who have been exposed to Hepatitis C.

The UK wide "look-back" exercise is designed to trace the small number of patients who may have been exposed to Hepatitis C through blood transfusions from donors subsequently found to be positive.

The Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service has been undertaking pilot studies in preparation for this exercise. SNBTS doctors will be on the UK Working Party of experts set up by the UK Departments of Health. This working party will be drawing up guidance on the procedures for undertaking the "look-back" programme, including counselling those identified as being at risk, as well as guidance on the treatment options available.

Professor Cash, SNBTS National Medical Director said:

"The UK Blood Transfusion Services, are among the safest in the world. All donations have been routinely tested for Hepatitis C since 1991 when an appropriate test became available.

Over 5 million patients have undergone surgery in Scotland in the last 10 years. Only a small proportion of these will have had a transfusion and it is estimated that fewer than 300 will have been exposed to the Hepatitis C virus.

We shall be doing all we can to work with patients' doctors to trace the very small number of patients concerned."

### NOTES FOR EDITORS

- 1 The 0800 716 197 advice line announced by the Department of Health also applies in Scotland.
- 2 Anti viral treatment of blood plasma products was introduced back in January 1985 and has proven effective against this virus. Blood plasma products have therefore been well protected for the last 10 years.

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**NEWS RELEASE**