

file
Reference.....

BLH/1 VLE

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 furore. 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.

HS-1A
Room 1208, Hannibal House

16 July 1982

cc: