

Reference.....

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AIDS

I refer to your minute of 19 July 1983. As you say, we will need to seek Ministers' views on how the AIDS leaflet might best be distributed. I had recalled Lord Glenarthur's preference for a consistency of approach but do not remember his forming any definite view on how this might be done.

For my part, I am quite sure that the best way is to send out the leaflet with the call-up cards so that the contents can be studied by individuals in private. I do not think donors would take exception to receiving a leaflet in this way, couched in the way it is as general information on a subject of public interest. I personally would have thought this would entirely satisfy the low key approach that Ministers and all of us want.

The only alternative is to make the leaflet available at donor sessions or positively hand it out at donor sessions. In either event it could place a donor in an impossibly embarrassing situation or defeat the objective of the leaflet. For example, if having read the leaflet before donation the donor feels he should decline to give blood it is embarrassing to walk out as everyone will suspect the reason for his doing so. If he reads the leaflet or considers it while actually donating blood, again he can hardly say anything without embarrassment, and if he is in the high risk group of donors possibly infected blood will get into the system. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if people are rejected for donation during a session for quite other reasons others who see them leaving may assume that they are in the high risk AIDS group of donors when in fact the reasons may be quite different. All this points in my mind to the benefit of distributing the leaflets with call-up cards so that those who feel any concern can discuss the matter privately with their own doctors or with the transfusion centre without undue embarrassment.

I think we will need to make these points to Ministers but at the same time we may need to point out that our ability to influence Transfusion Directors is limited and many will do what they themselves think is in the best interests of their donors. At present the majority seem persuaded by the above arguments for notification with the call-up cards.

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