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Ms Laura Dunlop QC
The Penrose Inquiry
44 Drumsheugh Gardens
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Date 27 June 2011
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Dear Ms Dunlop

Request for Witness Statements in Relation to Immunological Testing in Glasgow:
Professor Charles Forbes, Professor Gordon Lowe and Dr Karin Froebel

I refer to our conversation at the conclusion of the evidence on Tuesday 21 June. You asked that I discuss with Professor Forbes the witness statement provided by Dr Froebel on the Immunological Testing carried out in Glasgow. The particular paragraphs of Dr Froebel's statement upon which you sought his specific comment were:-

"Things were moving very quickly in the field. In Spring of 1984, two reports, from Montagnier in France, and Gallo in the US, claimed to have isolated a virus from patients with AIDS. Both were working on an antibody (ELISA) assay, a blood test that would show exposure to the virus. We were interested to know as soon as possible whether the Glasgow haemophilic patients had antibody to the virus. In Glasgow there was a freezer-full of stored serum samples from an earlier study, which Dr Forbes suggested could be used. I wrote to both Montagnier and Gallo, and had a reply from Dr Gallo, directing me to send the samples to his research scientist. The samples (77) were located, I think by Dr Madhok, packed in dry ice, and Dr Forbes and I took them to Glasgow airport to be air-freighted to the laboratory in the US. At this point, I still thought the results would be negative; that we were dealing with something different in Scotland and I can still recall the shock when the news came back that 12 of our 77 samples, ie 16%, tested positive. Very soon after that, Mads Mellbye appeared, and suggested writing a joint paper, pooling our results with his 22 Danish samples, and this resulted in the Lancet paper in December 1984.

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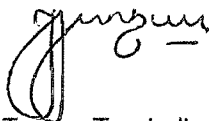
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***At this point I recall Dr Forbes saying that he would speak to all the haemophiliac patients and tell them that they were at risk of infection, and should take the necessary safe sex precautions, ie use condoms. The test carried out in the US had not yet been approved by the regulatory body; therefore we could not say for sure that the 12 were definitely infected or that the 65 were definitely not. I also recall Dr Forbes telling me soon after, that he had spoken to all the patients. I had no direct contact with patients at any time."***

Professor Forbes' position is that he does not remember the events described in those paragraphs, ie the sending of the samples to Dr Gallo's research scientist in America, albeit he knew of Dr Gallo and the work he was doing. Professor Forbes has advised me that he is happy to defer to Dr Froebel's recollection of events on this matter and accepts that what she describes is a logical explanation of events.

I trust this is of assistance, however please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish me to pursue matters further with Professor Forbes.

Yours sincerely



Tracey Turnbull  
Senior Solicitor