Topic C2: Response from Dr PR Foster to a Request from the Penrose Inquiry

Request

In the footnote to his C2 supplementary statement Professor Cash refers to documents in 1994 which discuss whether donor plasma sent to BPL for fractionation should be ALT tested with a view to enabling any excess plasma products produced by BPL (in particular, albumin and immunoglobulin) to be exported.

We are unsure whether or not ALT testing of plasma sent to BPL for fractionation was actually introduced in England and Wales and, if it was, when it was introduced and for how long such testing lasted.

Counsel suggests asking for clarification by Prof Cash, Dr Perry and/or Dr Foster.

Response from Dr PR Foster

I was aware that there was a proposal from BPL for plasma for fractionation to be subjected to surrogate testing (i.e ALT) by the National Blood Authority (NBA), despite already having been tested for antibody to the hepatitis C virus. The reason for this proposal was that ALT testing was still required in some countries (eg. Germany) and the absence of such testing in the UK meant that BPL could not export its products to those countries that still required this testing to be performed.

To the best of my knowledge, this proposal was not supported by the NBA and surrogate (ALT) testing of plasma for fractionation was not introduced in England & Wales. However, testing and selection of donors was not my area of expertise, nor my area of responsibility, and I would not necessarily have been informed of this practice if it had been introduced in England & Wales.

A definitive answer to this question should be obtainable from relevant employees of the NBA, such as Dr John Barbara or Dame Marcela Contreras.

Dr Peter R Foster

18 October 2011.

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