

Vest NQF/1/5 194 (70/1)

Mr Murray

HEAT TREATED FACTOR VIII

Your minute of 23 May invites comments on the CSA's case for funding the production of heat treated factor VIII. The paper enclosed is indeed a straight lift of a paper considered and approved by the BTS Sub Committee on 22 February 1984.

I have no comment on the paper itself which is essentially technical. What it fails to bring out is the policy case for proceeding with this development. The objective of this more complicated means of producing factor VIII from plasma is to reduce the risks of transmission of viral disease, particularly hepatitis. At present nearly all "virgin" (newly-treated) haemophiliacs become infected with non-A non-B hepatitis, though not usually of dramatic severity. About 40% show evidence of infection by hepatitis B. The longer term effects of such infection in haemophiliacs is not known with certainty because until relatively recent years haemophiliacs had little prospect of living into middle or old age. However a significant proportion of "normal" patients infected with hepatitis B go on to suffer severe liver impairment which, apart from the personal aspect, makes significant demands on health care resources.

The international commercial manufacturers of factor VIII are beginning to produce heat treated products and if this country is to be self-sufficient in blood products in any meaningful sense of the term we must provide a similar therapeutic product. Otherwise Health Boards will be forced into very expensive purchases of commercial product and the resources of the SNBTS will not be used to best effect. This is not a matter of product differentiation for marketing purposes but represents a genuine and important advance in therapy. The heat treated factor VIII may also prevent the transmission of AIDS, though it is too early to make such a claim with any confidence.

It is not for me to say how this development should be financed but I can say that it is a genuine technological advance and a failure to bring it about would be very difficult to defend publically.



A E BELL
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