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Glasgow and West of Scotland BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

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To: Chief Administrative Medical Officers
District Medical Officers
Consultant Haematologists to Area Health
Boards in West of Scotland

TESTING OF DONATIONS FOR THE PRESENCE OF
HEPATITIS B SURFACE ANTIGEN (HBsAg)

The method of testing individual donations for HBsAg recommended by Scottish Home and Health Department in the light of advice received from its Advisory Group is reversed passive haemagglutination (RPHA). It is generally acknowledged that the most sensitive technique for the detection of HBsAg is radioimmunoassay (RIA).

In order to evaluate the superiority of RIA over RPHA in the detection of HBsAg in donations, a specially financed research project was started in this region on 15 August, 1975, the project being planned to cover total screening for one year. After nine months of this comparative trial it became clear that RIA was superior to RPHA, and the results were submitted to SHHD, which determines blood transfusion policy, with a request for additional finance to support the screening of donations by RIA after 14 August, 1976. A copy of the report was sent to the Common Services Agency which is responsible for the management of this service.

The reply from SHHD states that RPHA is the recommended method of testing and is the method which should be employed in this region after the middle of August, 1976. Accordingly, RIA testing of donations for the presence of HBsAg will cease on 14 August, 1976, and thereafter RPHA will be the method used for total screening. In the light of the evaluation it is estimated that in the course of one year from 9 to 16 donors who are chronic carriers of HBsAg detectable by RIA will not be detected by RPHA.

JOHN WALLACE,

Regional Director.