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PRIVATE OFFICE

It may be helpful for MS(H) to have a little background since the reply is less helpful than may like.

Abbott are one of the first companies to develop an AIDS antibody test. They would dearly like to tie up the NHS market.

We are evaluating tests as they become available. The work is being done by the PHLS. After an initial technical evaluation they will be tested again for operational acceptability in the blood transfusion context.

Technical evaluation of Abbott and one other will probably be completed by July. We will then be under some pressure to complete any extra evaluation quickly. Certainly the 10,000 test proposal referred to may well have to be truncated.

It would not be helpful to have no other choice than Abbott since their test requires special equipment. It would also be preferable to have a British test evaluated as a possible candidate.

It is therefore not desirable to be precise about the timetable for testing Abbott's test in isolation.

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