

- Mr. Hogg*  
 1. Copy to Mr. McGuire and Mr. Tucker ✓  
 2. Prep. pps + discuss next steps

1. Dr J S Metters  
 2. Mrs Baldock  
 PS (PS(L))

*RD*  
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From: J Canavan EHF1A  
 EHF1A  
 505 Eileen House  
 Ext [REDACTED]

Date: / May 1990

cc: Mr Malone-Lee - Dir Ops  
 Dr Pickles - MEDISD  
 Mr Dobson - EHFI  
 Dr Rejman - MEDISD  
 Miss Wheeler - FA2B  
 Mr R Panton - SHHD  
 Mr D McGlinn - WO  
 Mr G Walker - NI

SCREENING OF BLOOD DONATIONS FOR HEPATITIS C VIRUS

Minister may recall that the question whether to screen all blood donations for hepatitis C virus has been under discussion in the Advisory Committee on the Virological Safety of Blood. This note is to advise Minister of developments.

In France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Finland screening has recently been introduced for all donations and in Italy the screening is voluntary. However at its meeting on 24 April, our Committee reaffirmed its view that the introduction of routine screening would not yet be justified. The new tests developed in the USA have not been approved by the Food and Drugs Administration and there are still unresolved difficulties concerning the tests. The Committee has advised that a pilot study should be carried out to learn more about the significance of a positive reaction to the test and the extent to which it predicts infectivity which could be transmitted in blood. A working party has been set up to draw up a protocol for the study and this will be considered at the ACVSB's next meeting on 24 July.

The Department will be asked to provide funds for the study. Until its size and nature have been defined it is difficult to estimate a cost but it may be substantial.

We shall report again to Minister after the next ACVSB meeting.

*John Canavan*  
 J CANAVAN