

Press Release

Embargoed until 11 am on Tuesday February 17th, 2009

From: National Haemophilia Council

Re: Haemophilia & Exposure to vCJD

We have now learned that a man in his 70's with haemophilia who recently died in the UK of a cause unrelated to vCJD had evidence of infection with vCJD in his tissues on autopsy. The individual did not have clinical evidence or symptoms of vCJD and did not die of vCJD.

“Experts in the UK now believe that it is likely that this man was infected with vCJD from UK plasma-derived Factor VIII concentrate. This man appears to have been infected with vCJD from a batch of Factor VIII that is known to have included plasma from a donor who later died of vCJD.” stated Mr. Brian O Mahony, CEO of the Irish Haemophilia Society.

“To date, there has not been a case of vCJD in a person with Haemophilia anywhere in the world but we will continue to monitor the situation and inform the haemophilia community in Ireland on a proactive basis.” stated Dr. Barry White, Director of the NCHCD.

People with Haemophilia were previously informed in 2004 of their possible increased risk of exposure to vCJD via UK plasma-derived clotting factors, and although it is unlikely that this new finding will change their risk status, we recognise that the new finding may be distressing for those who suffer from haemophilia and other bleeding disorders.

“It should be stressed that all persons with Haemophilia A in Ireland have been treated with Recombinant or synthetic (not derived from human plasma) Factor VIII Concentrate since 1997 and all those with Haemophilia B with Recombinant Factor IX since 1999 (as soon as the Recombinant Factor IX was available).” stated Dr. Barry White.

The approximately 50 Irish patients who used UK plasma derived products have been informed of these developments and a letter has also been sent to all people with haemophilia and related bleeding disorders in Ireland updating them on the current situation.

A specific helpline is now in operation at the National Centre for Hereditary Coagulation Disorders in St. James Hospital. The Helpline commenced this morning at 9am and will operate until 5pm today and from 9am to 5pm until Friday 20th February and from Monday 23rd to Friday 27th of next week .The helpline number is 1800 200 849.

To address any residual concerns, meetings for persons with haemophilia will take place next Friday week, February 27th in Cork and on Saturday February 28th in Dublin.

Background

In 2004, several thousand people with haemophilia in the UK were notified that they had an increased risk above the general UK background population risk of developing vCJD. This was due to their exposure from 1980 to 2001 to factor concentrates manufactured from plasma. These plasma derived products were manufactured from plasma pools and 9 donors whose plasma was used to make these pooled products subsequently developed vCJD. None of these implicated batches were used in Ireland but some Irish people with haemophilia did use these and other batches of plasma derived factor concentrates when treated in the UK.

Some 50 people with haemophilia in Ireland used products manufactured in the UK. As a result of this risk assessment, the haemophilia community in Ireland were fully informed in September 2004 via letter, dedicated phone lines, meetings and following a press conference and briefing, through the media

For further information Contact

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Enclosures

Copy of Letter sent to persons with Haemophilia on February 16th, 2009