

**Minutes of the Twenty-second Meeting of NHS Blood and Transplant
held at 9.30am on Thursday 10th January 2008
at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
27 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RG**

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| Present: | Mr E Fullagar | Mrs B Newington |
| | Mr J Forsythe | Dr C Ronaldson |
| | Mr P Garwood | Mr C Rudge |
| | Mr D Greggains | Mr B Savery |
| | Mrs J Gubbins | Dr D Walford |
| | Mr G Jenkins | Dr L Williamson |
| | In attendance: | Ms L Hamlyn |
| Mr D Dryburgh | | Mr A McDermott |
| Mr D Evans | | Mr W Connon |
| Ms H Joy | | Ms J Minifie |
| Mr T Male | | |
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08/01 APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr Fullagar welcomed Ms Lynda Hamlyn to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Mrs Buggins, and Mr Fullagar said she had told him that, on the basis of the information provided on the NBS Strategy Review at the December meeting, she was content with the general direction of its findings.

08/02 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

08/03 MATTERS ARISING

03.1 NRRC

Mrs Newington said that arrangements for funding transplant related research had been set in train at a meeting held on 9th January.

03.2 Cash Limits

Mrs Newington said she had approached the Department but had not yet received a response and would continue to pursue the question. The DH had previously undertaken to provide NHSBT's official cash limits by mid February at the latest.

03.3 Flu Pandemic Planning

Mrs Newington said she had also written to the DH regarding funding for NHSBT in the event of a flu pandemic but had not yet received a response. Mr Connon said he had followed up the question about the control of information relating to contingency planning for emergencies and expected to be in a position to write to NHSBT by the end of the month.

08/04 PERFORMANCE REPORTS FROM THE OPERATING DIVISIONS

04.1 BPL

Mrs Martin said that BPL continued to perform very well with all indicators on green except for sales which were slightly below target. This had been the result of a slight delay to a shipment due to a document change and sales were now back on track.

BPL was continuing to work hard on compliance issues and was making good progress.

Mrs Martin had reported the outcomes of a MHRA inspection at a previous meeting. She now reported that a negative story about this, originally considered by the Sun in November, had been published over the New Year and repeated in local newspapers. With the help of NHSBT communications, BPL was responding by informing customers, exporters, distributors, the media, and industry press about the inaccuracies of the report and both the MHRA and the union were co-operating over this. The DH had been kept informed.

Mr Greggains asked about the position on the transfer of technology to Kazakhstan and Mrs Martin said BPL was waiting for money to be released and nothing would be done until the first payment had been received.

04.2 **NBS**

Dr Ronaldson said that contrary to expectations, during December, and the Christmas holiday period in particular, the number of red cell units in stock had fallen to between 22,000 and 23,000. In response, in addition to the marketing initiatives referred to in the report he had insisted that operational managers attend sessions to talk to donors, to take any simple steps possible to reduce queues and so on. These current activities would be reinforced with other initiatives which the Board would hear about later in the agenda. Historically stocks had risen over January and February and, while that was no guarantee for the future, early signs of an upturn were just beginning to emerge. There was some general discussion about the reasons for the position and it was clear that turning this position around was NHSBT's most urgent priority. Mr Cannon said he had met with Mr Fullagar and Dr Ronaldson the previous day to discuss the issue.

On other matters, Dr Ronaldson said that there were no major issues in terms of quality and safety; an MHRA inspection in Sheffield commencing before Christmas and shortly to be completed had not yet suggested any serious problems although he had previously reported the need to strengthen the Quality Assurance area in future. The NBS expected to meet its financial targets for the year; staff turnover was high, particularly in donor services where it needed to be addressed before the problem became more serious; absence was above target and was causing problems for some collection teams. (Mr Jenkins joined the meeting.)

Mr Garwood said that, at its stem cell facility in Leeds, on 14 January NHSBT would undergo its first inspection by the Human Tissue Authority and he expected to be able to report a satisfactory outcome.

04.3 **UKT**

Mr Rudge said that transplant trends continued as before although UKT had experienced its busiest Christmas on record.

Mr Rudge had previously drawn the Board's attention to the suspension of heart transplants at Papworth hospital and now reported that the rapid review of the programme which had taken place had revealed no major issues. The programme had now resumed following only minor internal improvements. He said that the monitoring system operated jointly by the Royal College of Surgeons and UKT – which had not identified the potential problem at Papworth - had identified a problem in Glasgow. The Scottish Government had been informed and had immediately suspended the programme there. A review had commenced which would not be completed for several weeks.

08/05 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Mr Savery presented his report; blood stocks had already been covered. He drew the Board's attention to the staff and stakeholder meetings which had taken place as part of the communications plan supporting the Review of the NBS Strategy. He also summarised the position on the outcomes of the Organ Donor Taskforce Review which were expected to be announced on 15th January (although there was a possibility that this timing would be revised slightly depending on which Ministers were involved). Communications on both these areas were being developed and the Board would be kept informed.

On Project Ruby, Mr Savery said that item four of his report should refer to a DH Oversight Board meeting, rather than a Steering Group meeting. Mr Connon confirmed that Prof Lindsey Davies would be attending this meeting.

Mr Savery said he had met with Ms Hamlyn the previous day and started the process of handover and induction. The new Financial Director would take up post at the beginning of April and would be spending several days with Mr Savery at NHSBT during March.

The Board noted the actions which had been taken on the serious issue of protection of personal data. Mr Jenkins said the GAC would be seeking assurance that protocols for dealing with this issue were embedded throughout the organisation.

8/06 **FINANCE REPORT**

Mrs Newington presented the report. She said the income and expenditure position was good, particularly within BPL. Provisional agreement by the DH for NHSBT to carry over £23m into 2008/09 had been received, with confirmation awaited in February. UCLH had been chased on several occasions but their account was currently up to date following a payment on 3 January. Mrs Newington was asked to check whether the account with BPL was also up to date. The issue of guidance on Losses and Special Payments remained outstanding although the DH were pressing the Treasury for a resolution. Mr Connon confirmed that the DH would continue to seek a resolution. On blood prices a third quarter review was about to commence to determine the amount to be refunded to hospitals. The DH had been informed of an anticipated underspend of £6m on capital. Mrs Gubbins asked whether this had resulted from cutting any corners or not doing something originally planned and Mrs Martin and Mr Dryburgh confirmed that it had not.

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08/07 **MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

07.1 **Advisory Committee on Safety of Blood Tissues and Organs (SaBTO)**

Dr Williamson said the membership of the Committee had not been included as it was not in the public domain at the time she had written her report but this could now be circulated. Since writing the report she and Mr Garwood had taken part in a meeting with Dr Ailsa Wight and others from the DH to update them on current issues relating to vCJD risk reduction. Dr Williamson had provided a paper to the November Board meeting on this topic and would be bringing the first of regular quarterly updates to the February meeting. Mr Connon said that the NBS's senior microbiologist, Dr Pat Hewitt, would be meeting Dawn Primarolo on Monday at her request to discuss the UK-wide policy on men who have had sex with men (MSM). The current policy of life-long deferral had been challenged many times over the years and the Minister had asked to be briefed.

07.2 Dr Williamson said that Dr Hewitt and others in the NBS had been working with the Ministry of Defence for several weeks on a matter that was now within the public domain. This concerned troops who had been transfused in the field in Afghanistan with blood which had not been tested to the normal standards. Those affected had been informed and the NBS had agreed to carry out testing in its microbiology reference laboratories. Dr Williamson said that the NBS provided considerable background support to the military and she could provide a detailed paper on that activity if the Board wished. She added that she would be meeting with the Surgeon General to discuss this within the next few weeks.

07.3 Use of Embryonic Stem Cells and Fetal Tissue in Health Care Research

Presenting this part of her report, Dr Williamson apologised for raising this matter at a time of other pressing issues. There was a discussion around the reasons for the change to the decision originally taken by the National Blood Authority (NBA) and the perceived change in public attitude to this type of research in the five years which had passed since then. The Board agreed to consider a full paper at their next meeting. They requested that this covered an additional question i.e. any differences between the legislative framework of NHSBT and that of the NBA. Dr Williamson also agreed to cover other points raised i.e. any additional evidence about donors'/public views on this type of research, any such evidence from other countries and information about alternative, or the absence of alternative, facilities where this work could be carried out.

08/08 REPORTS FROM THE MAIN COMMITTEES

The minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 28th November were noted.

08/09 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE STAFF SURVEY

Mr Evans presented the paper, highlighting the areas of good progress and those where more progress was needed. He said the next update to the Board would provide a comparison of these results with the results of the next staff survey, which was to be launched at the beginning of February, together with a revised action plan.

Dr Walford urged focus on a small number of key issues and said she considered that surveys of this kind provided no benefits without that approach. Mr Greggains said he believed that the Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) should play a significant part in responding to some of the outcomes of the survey and Mr Evans agreed to provide the Board with regular updates on progress. Mr Greggains also requested a skills inventory for the organisation. Mr Evans agreed with this in principle but said he would wish to give more thought to how this should be developed before giving a commitment to do so. Mr Connon suggested that 'Professional Skills for Government', a framework developed by the Cabinet Office, might be useful. Mrs Gubbins asked whether it had been possible to adjust shift patterns to make them more convenient for staff; Mr Evans said these needed to be addressed locally and discussions with staff in preparation for the new Filton centre had been very positive.

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08/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

08/11 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on Thursday 7th February.

08/12 **RESOLUTION ON CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

The resolution was passed.

08/13 Some members of staff were in attendance and Mr Fullagar offered them the opportunity to address the Board briefly. Mr Andy Ford of Amicus said staff recognised the need for redeployment where work levels had changed but urged the Board not to base their decisions on consultant presentations alone, adding that a more democratic approach involving staff could provide similar information with the added benefit of real work experience. Mr Fullagar thanked the staff members for attending the meeting and said the Board were anxious to bring the long period of uncertainty for staff to an end and intended to publish the outcomes of the Review by the end of the month.