

23 Feb 2009

SaBTO

Advisory Committee on the Safety
of Blood, Tissues and Organs

Area 530, Wellington House, Department of Health,
Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG
Telephone: (020) 79724750
E-mail: SaBTO@dh.gsi.gov.uk

24 February 2009

Deborah Jack
Chief Executive
National Aids Trust
New City Cloisters
196 Old Street
London EC1V 9FR

Dear Ms Jack

Thank you for your recent letter. I am happy to clarify the planned approach that SaBTO will employ when considering the donor exclusion issues that you have raised during the recent correspondence.

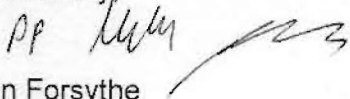
First, SaBTO will take account of the relevant experience from other countries. We are aware that some countries have in place deferral policies, rather than exclusion, and I am assured by the secretariat that information on these, where available, will be presented to the committee.

SaBTO is a new committee with an onerous work plan and this will be the first time that SaBTO members have considered an item on these issues in any depth. It is quite possible that the research to be presented to the committee may not cover all aspects of concern and it is likely that initial discussions in July will act as basis for a full review of policy. SaBTO is an independent scientific advisory committee and all recommendations should be based on the best and most up-to-date scientific evidence that is available.

I am aware that the issues around donor exclusion are controversial and a number of charities and other representative organisations have expressed views in this area; in general the views are in support of the current policy but concerns have also been expressed. SaBTO is sensitive to such concerns and is keen that engagement with any party proceeds in an open and honest fashion.

It is clear that there are many who would be prepared to contribute their views in an open forum. We have already mentioned the fact that every year SaBTO intends to hold a public meeting. It has been suggested that one of the topics for this year's meeting may be donor deferral and exclusion. Once the topics and the logistics of the meeting have been finalised, we will be in touch once again.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Forsythe
SaBTO Chair