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POLICY  
IN CONFIDENCE

Dr Nicholas PS/CMO

From: Dr Wight  
Date: 13 August 1992  
Copy: Dr Metters  
Mr Heppell  
Dr Steadman  
Dr Skinner  
Ms Lockyer  
Mr Murray

CREUTZFELDT JACOB DISEASE (CJD)

1. We have been advised on the medical network of an event concerning CJD. As this is likely to attract media attention you will want to be aware of the background, and the need for DH and MAFF Ministers (and DH Press Office) to be suitably alerted.

Background

2. I have been made aware on a medical in confidence basis of a case of probable CJD in a 60 yr old farmer who had had a dairy cow with BSE on his farm. The patient comes from the Manchester area and his physician informed Dr Will's CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh of the likely diagnosis. Dr Will's research registrar has visited the patient to confirm the relevant history and collect other clinical details. The patient has now been readmitted to hospital, which is not surprising given the rapidly progressive clinical course of CJD. Dr Will's Unit will hopefully be sent post-mortem material so that the diagnosis can be confirmed.

3. I must emphasise that the diagnosis has not been confirmed, although it is likely on clinical grounds. There is no direct evidence that the two events (BSE and CJD) are linked and Dr Will feels they are probably a coincidence. Despite the rarity of CJD, it was perhaps only a matter of time before this situation arose, given the large numbers of people employed in the agriculture and related industries, and the fact that BSE cases now total over 65,000.

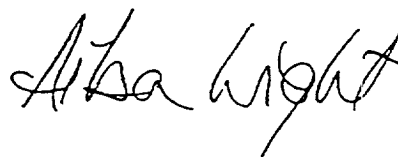
4. I understand the staff looking after him are aware of his probable diagnosis and of the fact that he had a cow with BSE, and the case could become public at any time. Therefore should the story break, the following line for DH to take is suggested:

"We are aware of the development of probable CJD in a farmer, though the diagnosis has not been confirmed. To date, there is no scientific evidence to link BSE with the human illness CJD and the information available in this case does not change this situation."

Action

5. In this situation, and not withstanding the problems of confidentiality, there may be a need to alert our Ministers and Pres. Office to this case. MAFF would also need to know. Administrative colleagues have been closely involved and feel that Ministers, ID and MAFF should be told. Do you agree with this line of action?

6. In view of the sensitivity and the need for confidentiality, you may wish to speak personally with CVO on the basis of the information in this note. Thereafter, we would keep MAFF appraised of developments as appropriate.



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