

Paragraph 16

- 1. Miss E M Jones
- 2. Mr A Thornton *not available*
- 3. PS/Parliamentary Secretary

- cc PS/Secretary of State
- Mr J W Lloyd
- Mr P Gregory
- Dr D Hine
- Miss M Bull
- Dr E J Ludlow
- Mr G Podmore
- Mr H G Roberts

KL/A
Frank from the Ministry
has not seen the file
for 11/6

CRÉUTZFELDT JACOB DISEASE (CJD)

Purpose

1. To advise on recent statements made on the outcome of the brain biopsy taken from the sixteen year old girl alleged, by the media, to be suffering from CJD.

Background

2. CJD is one of a family of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, so called because of the spongy appearance of the brain under a microscope. The family of diseases includes BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) in cattle and scrapie in sheep. was admitted to hospital towards the end of last year. The media reported that had possibly become infected with CJD as a result of eating beefburgers. This resurrected fears about a possible link between BSE in cattle and CJD in humans.

3. The Medical Director at Hospital advised the Department on 6 June that the results of brain biopsy had been received and that it showed no evidence of CJD. Hospital subsequently issued a statement to the press to this effect and this was publicised widely in the press (doc 1). News coverage which followed suggested that the statement made by Hospital had been misleading (doc 2). Enquiries have been made of the Medical Director at Hospital who has confirmed that the statement issued by the Hospital was issued in error. The facts are that two pathology reports on the same piece of brain tissue were received. The first report indicated that CJD was unlikely. The second report indicated that CJD was possible, perhaps even likely, but that no definitive diagnosis could be made before a post mortem was undertaken.

4. The present position with regard to remains that CJD can not be confirmed, in this case, at this stage. The CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh, colleagues in Department of Health and the Medical Director of Hospital have confirmed this. Diagnosis of CJD can usually only be confirmed by a full neuropathagal examination of the patient's brain material usually after death. remains very poorly and her health is still deteriorating. It is likely that she will now be transferred to the Community Unit.

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5. The statement made by Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health in January 1994 remains. This reaffirmed that there is no evidence at all that eating meat causes CJD and that, on the basis of the work done so far, there is no evidence that BSE causes CJD and, similarly, no evidence that eating beefburgers or hamburgers causes CJD.

i. The Department's press office has received a number of enquiries in the case. A suggested line to take for any further enquiries is as follows:-

It is not the Department's practice to comment upon individual cases of illness. Any enquiries on the health of Rimmer should be made to the Medical Director at Hospital.

Advice

7. The Parliamentary Secretary is invited to note the recent statements made on and the present position which remains that CJD cannot be confirmed, in this case, at this stage.

8 June 1994

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Public Health 3

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