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Health Products
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Direction générale des produits
de santé et des aliments

June 11, 2013

Ms. Lanre Tunji-Ajayi
Interim President and CEO
Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada
Association d'anémie falciforme du Canada
1030 Mountcastle Crescent
Pickering, Ontario, L1V 5H9

Ctl # 148307
13-106025-229

Dear Ms. Tunji-Ajayi:

Thank you for your letter of March 14, 2013, regarding the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada's (SCDAC/AAFC) position on the deferral of potential donors who lived in or travelled to African countries that are endemic of emerging HIV strains, and that of their sexual partners. We wanted to advance discussions with blood operators, hence our delay in responding.

Health Canada has recognized the importance of revisiting the deferral criteria for those at increased risk of infection with emerging HIV strains. We have discussed the scientific and operational aspects of this issue both with our external Expert Advisory Committee on Blood Regulation and with Canadian Blood Services (CBS) and Héma Québec (HQ). We also acknowledge that a 12 month deferral following potential exposure of sexual partners could result in the permanent deferral of the spouses of individuals at risk.

Following on these successful meetings and discussions, Health Canada's Biologics and Genetic Therapies Directorate has agreed to consider relaxing the deferral criteria in order to increase the availability of phenotypically matched blood for Sickle Cell Disease Patients. A meeting was recently held between Health Canada and representatives of CBS and HQ to discuss the risk management aspects of changes to this deferral. Agreement was reached for a proposal to be submitted to Health Canada by the blood operators to modify the deferral for sexual partners under certain conditions. I suggest that you contact either Dr. Christian Choquet (or Dr. Mindy Goldman) at CBS or Ms. Suzanne Remy (or Dr. Gilles Delage) at HQ to get details about their proposals.

Health Canada will continue to work with the blood establishments to ensure the deferral criteria, that are eventually implemented, do not compromise the safety of the blood supply.

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I suggest that we arrange a 4-way teleconference involving, Health Canada, CBS and HQ and SCDAC/AAFC regarding any proposed communications emanating from your June 19th meeting so that messaging could be co-ordinated by all groups.

Please contact the undersigned to arrange for the above teleconference.

Sincerely,



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