



National Health Service in Scotland
Management Executive

St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague

**CESSATION OF PLACENTAE COLLECTION BY
MERIEUX UK LTD**

Summary

1. General Managers and Chief Executives are requested to cease any arrangements which their maternity units may have for the collection and sale of placentae designated as clinical waste.

Action

2. General Managers and Trusts will wish to confirm as quickly as possible with their respective maternity units whether there is an arrangement with Merieux (or any other firm) for the collection of placentae and thereafter:

- notify Merieux in writing as soon as possible of termination of the agreement, in accordance with its terms, having first referred any legal queries to the Central Legal Office and received their advice;
- instruct the maternity units that on the expiry of the notice period (that is, as soon as the agreement is terminated) to cease the collection of placentae for Merieux;
- ensure that arrangements for the appropriate disposal of placentae are in place.

3. This letter should be copied to Unit General Managers, Chief Area Nursing Officers and Supervisors of Midwives for information.

Background

4. A number of maternity units in England and Scotland are understood to have arrangements with the company Merieux UK Ltd, for the storage and collection of placentae, some of which will have been in operation since 1976. Merieux provide freezers for the storage of placentae in maternity units and arrange collection of the placentae on a regular basis. The placentae are transported to the parent company's factory in France where the placentae are

13 August 1993

Addressees

For action:
General Managers,
Health Boards

Chief Executives and
Chief Executives
Designate, NHS Trusts

For information:
General Manager,
Common Services Agency

General Manager,
Health Education Board
for Scotland

To be copied to Unit
General Managers,
Chief Area Nursing
Officers and
Supervisors of
Midwives for
information

Enquiries to:

Mrs Robertson
SOHHD
Room 54H
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG
Tel: 031-244 2456
Fax: 031-244 2846

Contract Enquiries to:

Central Legal Office
Trinity Park House
South Trinity Road
EDINBURGH EH5 3SE
Tel: 031-552 6255
Fax: 031-551 3957

processed in order to extract albumin. Merieux's albumin is not licensed for use in the UK. Merieux are understood to pay small sums to maternity units to meet local expenses.

5. Although the past safety record of the relevant final product is not in question, the arrangements described above are not consistent with those which apply to blood collected in the UK. It is neither practicable nor desirable to introduce for placental blood arrangements similar to those which apply to blood from blood donors. The counselling and testing which would be necessary would create a large amount of additional work for staff which could not be justified when the sole purpose of collection is a commercial one. The Department of Health in consultation with the other UK Health Departments has therefore decided to recommend that the collection of placentae under the arrangements with Merieux UK Ltd should be brought to an end. The Company has been informed of this.

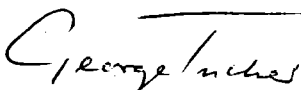
Termination of Agreements

6. Maternity units should as soon as possible give written notice of termination of their agreement with Merieux in accordance with its termination clause. It is understood that all agreements can be terminated by either party by a minimum of 28 days' written notice. However, all contracts/agreements with them should be checked with the Central Legal Office - particularly regarding the period of notice required to terminate them. Any queries concerning the legal details of agreements should be referred for legal advice. Under the standard Merieux agreement, the collection of placentae and their transfer to the freezer will require to continue as usual during the notice period (with the existing exclusions of certain placentae), but should cease on its expiry. During the notice period and afterwards, Merieux will be responsible for removing the placentae from the freezer as usual and the freezer itself when it is no longer in use.

Disposal of Placentae

7. All placentae, after taking account of the patient's wishes and except those which need to be sent for laboratory examination, will need to be collected from the delivery suite and incinerated as for other clinical waste. The disposal of a placenta is a personal issue for some patients and the disposal arrangements should meet with the wishes of the patient. Some religions may have specific requirements and these should always be respected. If a placenta is given to the patient for disposal it should be sealed in a suitable container.

Yours sincerely


G W TUCKER