



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for Health  
Office of Public Health and Science  
Washington D.C. 20201

JUL - 7 2009

Arthur W. Bracey, M.D.  
Chair, Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability  
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite 250  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Dr. Bracey:

I want to recognize and thank you for your letter regarding the December 2008 Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) recommendations. I understand the Department has already taken action on some of these recommendations.

The recognized potential transmission of babesiosis by blood products, organ, and tissue is a recipient safety concern. The Department's Public Health Service (PHS) agencies have been active on several fronts in addressing these concerns, establishing working groups to identify ways to promote and develop methods of donor screening and taking steps to accelerate development of pathogen reduction for blood components. In addition, to heighten awareness of the transfusion safety issue the Food and Drug Administration will sponsor a symposium on babesiosis at the November 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

The prevention and wellness recommendations come at a critical time and, as noted by the ACBSA, there is great opportunity to promote health and disease prevention through over 10 million donor encounters with blood and plasma collection centers. Since the ACBSA met in December, the Healthy People 2020 development team has begun formulating new national public health objectives, with representation from the various PHS agencies. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, within the National Institutes of Health, and the Food and Drug Administration will serve as co-leads on these objectives. While the recommendations regarding wider health screening will require more time to evaluate and develop, we hope to provide the committee an opportunity to comment on these objectives in the future.

In addition, I want to recognize the recommendation on the donor hemoglobin acceptance value and emphasize the importance of appropriate follow-up by blood and plasma

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collection facilities. The issue of gender-appropriate acceptance values is currently under review within the Department.

Please express my sincere appreciation to the entire committee on the recommendations provided. These recommendations and the input into Healthy People 2020 will help shape public health in the next decade.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Koh" followed by a horizontal flourish.

Howard K. Koh, M.D., M.P.H.  
Assistant Secretary for Health