



SCOTTISH OFFICE
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Mark Addison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON

9 June 1986

Dear Mark

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STUDY OF LEUKAEMIA IN SCOTLAND

You should have received ^{hasn't arrived} earlier today from our Parliamentary Branch in Dover House a copy of a study which was conducted to examine the incidence of leukaemia clusters occurring among under 25s in Scotland over the period 1968-1983.

Intimation of the publication of the results of this study has been given today in an answer by the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to an earlier Question from Mr J Corrie MP. A copy of that answer, a background brief and line to take are provided for your information.

Yours
And

A RINNING
Private Secretary

INVESTIGATION OF LEUKAEMIA CLUSTERS OCCURRING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE
AGED 0-24 YEARS IN SCOTLAND: REPORT BY INFORMATION SERVICES
DIVISION OF COMMON SERVICES AGENCY

Background Briefing

Earlier this year Information Services Division (ISD) undertook a scrutiny of cancer statistics in the Thurso area. This revealed a significant cluster of leukaemia in 0-24 year olds between 1979 and 1983 within 12.5 kms of the Dounreay plant. A study has now been undertaken to examine leukaemia figures for under 25s throughout Scotland over the period 1968-1983. The preliminary results now published are to be provided for the information of the Reporter to the Dounreay public local inquiry. The study examines the incidence of leukaemia by post code sector for three time periods 1968-1973, 1974-1978 and 1979-1983. It does not support the theory that leukaemia has a natural tendency to cluster in time and space and finds that the distribution of cases is the result of chance.

The Study suggests however that in view of the prior hypothesis linking raised incidences of leukaemia with nuclear establishments the five cases found in the West Thurso area cannot be explained as a wholly chance occurrence.

The report also examines the incidence of leukaemia within 12.5 kms of the nuclear establishments at Dounreay, Chapelcross, Hunterston and also the yet to be commissioned establishment at Torness. Raised levels of leukaemia have been found to exist in the areas around Hunterston and Chapelcross in the period 1979-83 although the excesses do not reach statistical significance. A further examination of leukaemia incidence around Hely Loch and Rosyth show during the period 1974-78 a raised incidence within 6.25 kms of Rosyth.

The study concludes that case control studies designed to identify a possible link between leukaemia and low level radiation should be undertaken. In the meantime the authors intend to further refine the information on which the study is based and to submit it to COMARE which will also be receiving similar studies currently being prepared in England and Wales.

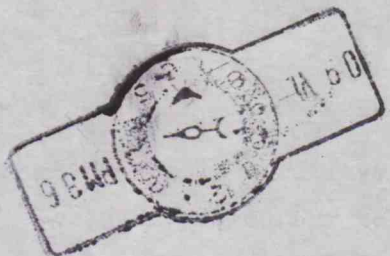
Copies of the ISD study have been circulated to SDD and IDS and also interested Whitehall Departments.

Line to Take

The Study has been produced at this time for the information of the parties to the Dounreay public local inquiry. It is part of a continuing consideration being carried out not only in Scotland but also in England and Wales into the possible links between leukaemia and nuclear establishments. A further and more comprehensive report will follow, which the Government will be studying with special care.

MR MALCOLM RIFKIND:

Pursuant to my reply of 15 April, results are now available of a preliminary study by the Information Services Division of the Common Services Agency into the incidence of leukaemia in Scotland in the 0-24 year age group. This study has been prepared for the public local Inquiry at Dounreay, and is to be made available by the Reporter to all the parties to the Inquiry. I have arranged for copies to be placed today in the library. The report suggests that leukaemia in 0-24 year olds shows no tendency to cluster, other than by chance. However, it identifies 3 postcode sectors where the incidence of leukaemia is considerably higher than expected - West Thurso, West Central Edinburgh, and South West Perth and Dunning. It acknowledges that in all 3 sectors this could have been a chance occurrence. However, because of the existence of a prior hypothesis which links the incidence of leukaemia with proximity to nuclear establishments, and the occurrence of 5 cases in the West Thurso postcode sector, which includes Dounreay, between 1979 and 1983, the report recommends that case control studies of areas near nuclear power stations be undertaken. I would stress that the 2 other areas identified in one of the 3 time bands studied have no links with nuclear establishments. This is furthermore a preliminary study. A fuller report is being prepared. It will be published and made available to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, who will be asked to advise on the case for and form of further studies.



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