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## HIQA will look at prion test for vCJD

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The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is to examine the introduction of prion testing and prion filtration to safeguard against the transmission of variant Creutzfeldt Jakob disease (vCJD) from blood donations.

Irish Medical Times has learned that the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health, **Dr Tony Holohan**, is due to discuss with HIQA the question of an 'appropriate assessment with regard to the potential introduction of these technologies in the future'.

Such a review is likely to take the form of a Health Technology Assessment (HTA), designed to inform decision makers on safe and effective health policies that are patient-focused and achieve best value for money. The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) has already estimated that introducing the technologies could cost up to E75 million over the next five years.

However, it believes applying formal evaluations to the cost of prion filtration and prion testing is 'fraught with difficulty'.

IBTS Medical and Scientific Director **Dr Willie Murphy** told *IMT* that blood products had a 'special status', equivalent more to pharmaceuticals than healthcare interventions. "We don't say to the pharmaceutical manufactures that we'll leave out that safety step, or drop that quality control, to take 10 cent off the price.

"If a new, better test for HIV becomes available, of course we spend the money to do it. As a nation, we would be appalled if we didn't," Dr Murphy added.

Posted in [Regulation](#) on *03 September 2009*

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