

Sue Cartwright PS/PS(L)

From: Jill Taylor  
HSD2

Robert Allan MCU

Date: 3 January 2001

Cc: Mr Berland HSD2  
Dr McGovern HSD2  
Mr Lister HSD2

**INVITATION 1362 - EDDIE O'HARA MP  
HAEMOPHILIACS WITH HEPATITIS C**

1. Charles Lister spoke to you today about this invitation to the Prime Minister from Eddie O'Hara MP. Mr O'Hara and Lord Morris who is President of the Haemophilia Society have asked for a meeting with the PM to discuss the compensation issue for haemophiliacs with hepatitis C. It should be noted that No 10 sent this to DH for a response on 7 December and this has only arrived in HSD2 today.

2. PS(L) is familiar with this particular issue and has recently met with the Manor House Group and is due to meet the Haemophilia Society on 24 January to discuss treatment issues. We feel that it would be more appropriate for him to meet with Mr O'Hara and Lord Morris if they are in agreement and if Lord Hunt is happy to do so. A reply has been drafted with this in mind. If PS(L) is not prepared to meet with Mr O'Hara please let me know as I will then need to redraft the letter.

3. A short background note on compensation for haemophiliacs with hepatitis C is attached.

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### **Background – Haemophilia /hepatitis C and compensation**

1. It remains the Government's policy, that compensation or other financial help to patients is only given when the NHS has been at fault. The Government does not believe that an exception should be made to that general rule in the case of people infected with haemophilia infected with hepatitis C. Heat treatments to remove viruses in blood products were developed in the 1980s, and the heat-treated products were made available as soon as they could be.
2. Ministers have given a great deal of careful thought to all the circumstances, including the fact that there is a special payment scheme for people with haemophilia infected with HIV in the 1980s. The conclusion was that the introduction of the HIV scheme was unique. Those who had the virus faced the prospect of developing AIDS and a consequent short life expectancy at that time. This is not the case with hepatitis C.
3. The letter from Eddie O'Hara refers to Alan Milburn (also John Denham) who signed an EDM in Opposition calling on the Government to consider giving financial assistance to haemophiliacs infected with hepatitis C. However, when this Government came into office, the decision taken by the previous Government not to offer financial assistance to haemophiliacs infected with hepatitis C through blood products was reviewed. Ministers met the Haemophilia Society and spent some time carefully considering the evidence they presented. The Government's decision was that they could not make an exception in this case to the general rule that compensation or financial help is only given when the NHS, or individuals working in it, have been at fault.
4. A small number of other countries have special payment schemes or have held public enquiries. This, though is a matter for them individually according to their particular circumstances.