

Client: Infected Blood Inquiry Yellow News
Source: The Herald
Date: 11/05/2022
Page: 5
Reach: 22901
Value: 919.4900

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Doctor got ‘zero’ training for role of senior medical officer, blood probe told

A DOCTOR who was appointed as senior medical officer responsible for haematology at the Department of Health in 1989 received “zero” training for the role, an inquiry has heard.

Dr Andrzej Rejman told the Infected Blood Inquiry that people were “friendly” and if he wanted to know something he just had to ask.

Dr Rejman, who was senior medical officer (SMO) from March 1989 until July 1997, said there was “no backstabbing” and people were “helpful”.

The inquiry is examining how tens of thousands of patients, including about 3,000 in Scotland, were infected with HIV and hepatitis C through contaminated blood products in the 1970s and 1980s.

About 2,400 people died in what has been labelled the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS.

A large amount of the infected products were imported from overseas, such as the US, after the UK failed to meet demand from patients, particularly from those with the blood-clotting condition haemophilia.

Yesterday at the inquiry, lead counsel Jenni Richards, QC, asked Dr Rejman: “What, if any, training did you receive on taking up your role as SMO?”

He replied: “Zero.”

Ms Richards then asked if it was a question of being “thrown in at the deep end and expected to get on with the job”.

Dr Rejman replied: “Well, basically, I think, in the department, I think you have to remember that people were friendly to each other.

“There was generally speaking no backstabbing.”

He said the principal medical officer, whom he reported to, welcomed him and said “if you have any problems, my door is there”.

Dr Rejman said: “In a sense, you know, I took it as it was. And I think, you know, people were helpful.

“I wanted to know something

I could ask them, whether they were a medic, or an administrator, you know, people were helpful.”

The Infected Blood Inquiry is being led by former High Court judge Sir Brian Langstaff. Two previous inquiries have been branded a whitewash by campaigners.

The inquiry, now being held in London, continues.