



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

April 29 1996 R30

Rt Hon John Major MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Prime Minister

Haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C

You will remember playing the decisive role in deciding that Haemophiliacs infected with HIV should receive an ex gratia payment. Following your intervention this scheme was widened to include non-haemophiliacs who had become infected with HIV through receiving contaminated blood.

Following my recent meeting with Stephen Dorrell I should like to raise the problem of those haemophiliacs (and others) who were infected with Hepatitis C in precisely the same way as others were infected with HIV.

These individuals can be divided into three groups. Around 20-25% of them will make a full recovery. A similar number will develop Cirrhosis whilst about half of them will be inconvenienced but will neither recover nor suffer a premature death. Within families the different treatment of those affected with Hepatitis C and HIV has caused great suffering and disquiet. In one family, two brothers died through being infected with HIV (and received 'ex gratia' payments), whilst a third died through Hepatitis C and his family received no compensation. His mother is unable to explain this distinction.

I believe that the government should re-examine this issue. I accept that the Department of Health's Budget is already stretched and that any help has to come from the Contingency Fund.

If all of those who had developed Cirrhosis were to receive a similar payment to that received by those infected with HIV, the initial cost in 1996/97 would be some £40m. Thereafter the annual cost would be some £4m.

In the United States several international drugs companies, such as Bayer, have agreed to fund a settlement for haemophiliacs. I was wondering if they might be persuaded to fund part of a settlement in the UK.

The National Lottery has far exceeded our original expectations. Would there be any possibility of the Charities Board of the Lottery helping with any settlement?



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In Southern Ireland the government has established a tribunal to determine awards to those infected with Hepatitis C through blood transfusion or blood products. I enclose a copy of a paper giving details of this Scheme.

This overall problem is a tragedy but a tragedy which cannot re-occur because of developments in the mid 1980s when screening of blood and blood products was introduced. We are therefore not dealing with an open-ended commitment. I therefore hope that because of your interest and support in the past you will re-examine this issue

Yours sincerely

John L Marshall
MP for Hendon South

GRO-C