



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE COMMITTEE HAEMOPHILIA AND HEPATITIS C

Thank you for your letter of 7 June.

You ask whether the exercise I have instigated covers non-haemophiliacs who might have contracted Hepatitis C through contaminated blood products and, if not, to extend the remit to include them. You also ask if I will publish the results of the exercise by the first week in July, and attend the committee to discuss the findings.

I instigated this exercise following specific concerns expressed a year ago about the discrepancy in the heat treatment of Factor VIII between Scotland and England in the period 1985-87. Having listened carefully to representations from the Haemophilia Society, I made sure the remit of the exercise was worded so as to concentrate on this issue. I believe it is generally accepted that other people have contracted the Hepatitis C virus via blood in other ways – for example, through blood transfusions before a test was available to screen blood for the virus. (The virus was only isolated and identified in 1989.) I would see limited value in directing resources towards examining an issue of which we already know the outcome, and for this reason I must respectfully decline your request to open up the exercise further.

The wider issue of compensation is a difficult one, and I shall be in a better position to discuss this once the report is published. I hope to be in a position to publish the report before the recess, and of course I am willing to attend the Committee to discuss it.

SUSAN DEACON