

# LAWSON INTERNATIONAL

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15 October 1996

Mr Michael Ancram MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Ancram

Further to my letter of 10 July 1995 I am sure you are by now aware that the Government, through John Horam, has turned down the request for financial assistance concerning the 3,000 people with haemophilia infected with the hepatitis C virus.

John Horam in his letter to the Rev. Prebendary Alan Tanner, the Chairman of the Haemophilia Society, states "there can be no question that they received the best treatment available at the time. That treatment was essential for their survival." Surely this is the same argument your government tried to use with HIV. Sadly, for those with liver problems, HCV is not so emotive as HIV.

Further to this, the recent World in Action programme has highlighted the insensitive approach taken by the Government to the issue of blood-product safety. In my opinion the statement of best possible treatment is flawed because in 1975 in a previous World in Action programme it was shown that Factor VIII being imported from the United States taken from paid donors was already infected by the hepatitis virus. We were promised that this country would be self sufficient in blood products by the late seventies. This stretched into the eighties and the new BPL has only been in operation for the last four to five years to bring this about. If this had happened in time your government would have more right to use the expression "best treatment available at the time".

Again your argument does not hold up even now as if the best possible treatment is available why isn't Recombinant Factor VIII being given to all people with haemophilia to save further infection, as in the case of the children in Manchester who contracted hepatitis A? As you know, to comply with European legislation the Recombinant product has a 17.5% VAT rate levied on it, which makes it too expensive for many Health Trusts. At least be consistent.

I feel for the Government to give us this financial assistance would gain it public support whereas insensitive statements and refusing help must be detrimental to the future of the Government.

Fortunately the Haemophilia Society continues to campaign to alleviate the distress of its members and for the families of those who have died. As one of the MPs who I believe understands our cause I would be grateful for any influence you can bring to bear in support of the aim to alleviate the suffering brought about by supplying contaminated goods.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

Nicholas S Lawson F Inst D

cc: Graham Barker, The Haemophilia Society  
GRO-D, Trustee of The Haemophilia Society  
and Member of Manor House Group