

HATTERSLEY

Andrew Griffiths CA-IU

From : Paul Pudlo CA-OPU2

Date : 19 December 1995

Copy : Mr Guinness
Dr Rejman

HAEMOPHILIACS WITH HEPATITIS C - SofS MEETING WITH ROY
HATTERSLEY AND THE MANOR HOUSE GROUP

1. Prior to 1985, when virological inactivation was introduced a number of haemophiliacs were inadvertently infected with Hepatitis C through the blood products with which they were treated by the NHS. A campaign was mounted about a year ago by the Haemophilia Society to secure compensation for such patients (around 3,000 in number) which has attracted considerable political support.

2. The Government's position has been throughout that in the absence of negligence, compensation is not appropriate, on the grounds that they are firmly opposed to a no-fault compensation scheme in relation to the NHS. However Ministers have expressed sympathy for those infected and have stated that everything possible, short of compensation, will be done to help them.

Section 40 (2)

3. Against this background SofS today met with a group of Haemophilia Society members, known collectively as the Manor House Group, together with the Chairman's (David Tonkin) MP - Roy Hattersley. All of the delegates has contracted Hepatitis C from blood products through NHS treatment. One of the issues raised was why Mr Tonkin had only been told that he had been identified as suffering from Hepatitis C last year, when the hospital records show that the diagnosis had been made in 1992. The hospital concerned is the Queen Elizabeth, Birmingham. This story was recently covered in the Birmingham Post (13 December 1995), so you may be aware already of some of the details. In particular it was claimed that some 250 letters had been sent out by the hospital last year to haemophiliacs, over half of which had tested positive for Hepatitis C.

4. The points made by the group in this connection were :-

Section 40 (2)

(i) Mr Tonkin had a "right" to know as soon as he had been diagnosed as suffering from Hepatitis C.

(ii) The delay in informing him meant that he had engaged in risk behaviour (GRO-C) and that he had been denied the opportunity of seeking early treatment.

5. We were unable to explain why the hospital might have withheld information from the patient. SofS said that enquiries would be made and he undertook to write to Roy Hattersley in due course. I would be grateful if you would arrange for this allegation to be looked into and let me have a form of words that could be used in a letter from SofS. Please let me know if there is any further information that you need.

6. We need to provide a draft as soon as possible after Xmas.

Paul Pudlo
Room 315, EH
Ext GRO-C