



Royal Free Hampstead



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The UK RCN Haemophilia Nurses Association

Richard Gutowski
Head of Blood Policy Division
Department of Health
Skipton House
80 London Road
London SE1 6LH

16th October 2003

Dear Mr Gutowski

Proposed ex gratia scheme for people with haemophilia infected with Hepatitis C through contaminated blood products

I am writing as Chair of the RCN Haemophilia Nurses' Association to express our concerns about how the scheme for settlement may be designed. We are a group of specialist nurses who know affected patients and families extremely well and have seen at close hand the profound physical, social and psychological impact of Hepatitis C. Since the Department of Health Press Release of 29th August 2003, patients have been asking haemophilia centre staff about the scheme and our response has been that the details are being worked on, although we do not have any information about the process or consultation mechanisms for this. Without this information, we are left wondering about the key principles that will underpin the scheme and whether they take account of the following questions:

- ◆ Will the scheme include those who are co-infected with HIV and Hepatitis C?
Hepatitis C is causing the greatest risk to the health of patients with HIV especially as antiretroviral combination therapy affects liver function.
- ◆ Will there be provision for those who have died as a consequence of their Hepatitis C infection?
Surviving family members have suffered the distress of the final illness and loss.
- ◆ Will there be some provision for those who have now cleared the virus?
- ◆ Whether there will be no exclusions from further action?
- ◆ Will the scheme will be the same for all UK countries?
- ◆ Will there be provision for any future decline in an individual's health attributable to Hepatitis C?



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- ♦ Will there be an assurance that payments will not be means tested, and will not jeopardise any existing welfare benefits nor incur tax liability?

In the absense of any request for the opinion of specialist haemophilia nurses, I trust that these brief points may be taken into account by those involved in the decision-making process. We would be delighted to be involved in any discussions or to provide further information.

Yours sincerely

Chris Harrington
Chair - RCN Haemophilia Nurses' Association



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