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Written Answer

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HEPATITIS C - LOOK BACK EXERCISE

84 Mr Michael Trend (C. Windsor and Maidenhead):

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what action is being taken by Her Majesty's Government to trace those who may be at risk of having been infected with hepatitis C as a result of blood transfusions.

MR SACKVILLE

The Government have accepted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues for Transplantation that a look back exercise should be undertaken with a view to tracing, counselling and treating those who may have inadvertently been infected with Hepatitis C through blood transfusions given in this country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has directed that this exercise should be undertaken as quickly as possible and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are making similar arrangements to ensure a co-ordinated United Kingdom approach.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee has been asked to bring together without delay an ad hoc Working Party of experts to draw up guidance on the procedures for undertaking the look back exercise and for counselling those identified as being at risk as well as guidance on the treatment options available.

The Blood Service in the UK continues to be one of the safest in the world and donors and patients should have the highest confidence that the standard of the service will be upheld.