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Our fight for justice

Colette Wintle took the fight for justice to Downing Street

by NIGEL JARRETT

Colette in march for victims of liver disease

THE fight for Britain's haemophilia sufferers who have contracted liver disease through the use of contaminated blood products has been taken to 10 Downing Street by a Tunbridge Wells woman.

Colette Wintle, 42, of GRO-C GRO-C was at the forefront of a march from Trafalgar Square to the Prime Minister's London home to highlight the victims' claims for compensation.

Mrs Wintle was diagnosed with her rare but incurable blood disorder – haemophiliacs lack the clotting agent which inhibits bleeding – when she was three years old.

At 17 she had her tonsils removed and during post-operative care was exposed to plasma infected with hepatitis, which attacks the liver.

Today, married and with a daughter Rebekah, six, she has been forced to give up work as a nurse, finds it impossible to get life assurance, is often in severe pain and is fearful for her future.

She is one of about 4,500 people with haemophilia given infected blood coagulants prior to 1988, and so has been unable to seek redress under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, as others have.

The 114 who have been successful, thanks to a High Court ruling by Mr Justice Burton last week, are expected to cost the National Health Service up to £10 million in compensation payments.

If others, like Mrs Wintle, were to win the same concession, it would add millions more to the bill, but she argues they have been equally put at risk by the use of contaminated products.

She said: "My life and those of many others have been blighted by

and drug addicts paid to give blood and whose Skid Row lifestyles put them at high risk from infections like hepatitis and HIV.

"As a result more than 800 people have died, and the feeling is that successive Governments are literally hoping the problem of compensation will fade as others also lose their lives."

Mrs Wintle, a Scot, is also angry that England persists in using clotting agents derived from human blood, while elsewhere in the UK the safe, genetically-made but more costly Factor VIII is specified.

Tunbridge Wells MP Archie Norman, the Shadow Environment Secretary, has pledged his support and joined Mrs Wintle and other demonstrators in London on Tuesday.

He said: "Haemophiliacs through no fault of their own are time and again being forced to run the gauntlet of contacting hepatitis and HIV. It now emerges they are also at risk

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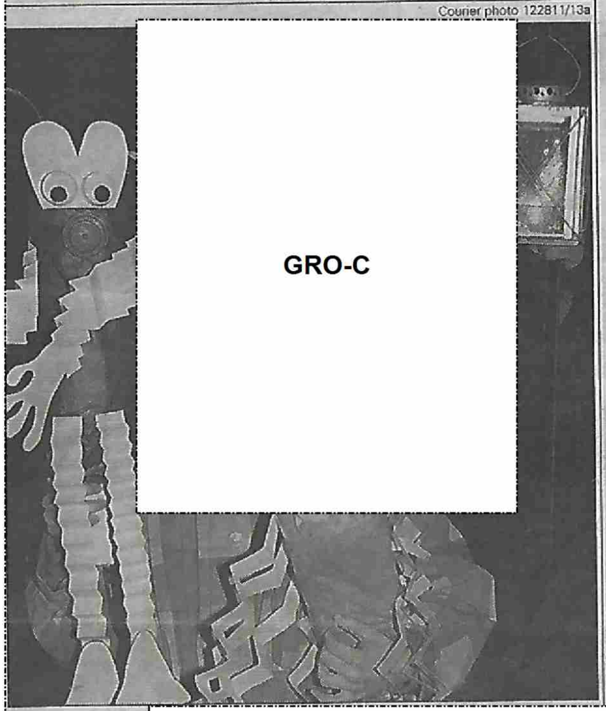
Mum takes protests to Downing Street

Courier photo 122811/13a



NIGHT LIGHT: GRO-C pictured at Sp for a parade on New Year's Eve. See story above

A TUNBRIDGE Wells mother who was infected with hepatitis C by the NHS during haemophilia treatment took her protests to 10 Downing Street on Tuesday.

Colette Wintle, 40, of GRO-C was part of a small delegation of people with the blood disorder and MPs who laid 113 white lilies on the steps of Number 10.

The event was organised by the Haemophilia Society to remind the Prime Minister of the 113 people with haemophilia who have died to date as a result of their infection with hepatitis C.

More than 4,000 people with haemophilia were infected with the virus by the NHS prior to 1986, but the Government has ruled out the possibility of an inquiry into how and why this took place.

Mrs Wintle said: "I was infected with hepatitis C in Scotland in 1976, when I needed treatment for excessive bleeding after a routine tonsil operation went wrong."

At no time was she warned the blood and blood products used could infect her with blood bone viruses.

She has had to retire from her job as a nurse as a result of fatigue caused by hepatitis C, and also due to the side effects from treatment, which was unsuccessful.

PROTEST: Colette Wintle

Mrs Wintle also called on the support of Tunbridge Wells MP Archie Norman.

Karin Pappenheim, chief executive of the Haemophilia Society said: "There are some 4,000 people with haemophilia who were infected with hepatitis C by the NHS and receive no help from the Government."

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sda cut ice of shion / £17m

ERMARKET giants are cutting prices on George clothes e by £17 million as igh street fashion hots up.

cost of childrenswear, en's fashion and vear is being cut by up er cent, causing further or hard-pressed stores Marks & Spencer.

a's Rollback The Prices ign has already brought st of food down across lustry by two per cent. British Retail Consor- say consumers are ng the cheapest prices rs.

pokesman said: petition is so tough, the ty of goods being sold ps today are cheaper ney've ever been.

Captured

ces on everyday goods er than they have been east two years.

stomers are the s here, and there's no n to suspect that tition will slacken off."

a's fashion range, ed by former Next guru Davies, has grown into million business, and ptured disillusioned hoppers.

e women are buying along with the weekly es, say insiders.

okeswoman for Asda, ly taken over by US Val-Mart, said: "Cus- like the convenience, ey like the prices and of our clothing range."

a Hall, of the fashion bible Drapers Record, I&S have had such bad retailers have been ith each other to steal of that market."

A blood transfusion

EVERYONE knows of the tragedy of people who contracted HIV through contaminated blood. Today, Sunday Mail Chief Writer DONNA WHITE reminds us all of the victims of the forgotten disease – hepatitis C.

AS Colette Wintle watches her husband take their daughter up in his arms, she cannot help but feel a twinge of sadness.

Colette cannot show five-year-old Rebekah such affection.

A haemophiliac from birth, the devoted mum contracted deadly hepatitis C through infected blood.

She is now in a daily state of exhaustion from the disease, which will one day kill her. She cannot even lift up her daughter because she needs to conserve what little precious energy she has.

Colette, 40, is one of hundreds of Scots sufferers campaigning for compensation from the Government after it was revealed that, until 1987, Scotland failed to treat blood products to kill off the virus.

As it is, her illness means she can never be more than a spectator in her family's active life.

Support

Colette said: "It breaks my heart that I can't do all the things other mums do with their children, but Rebekah seems to accept it.

"What she doesn't know is that I am living with a silent killer which will eventually take me away.

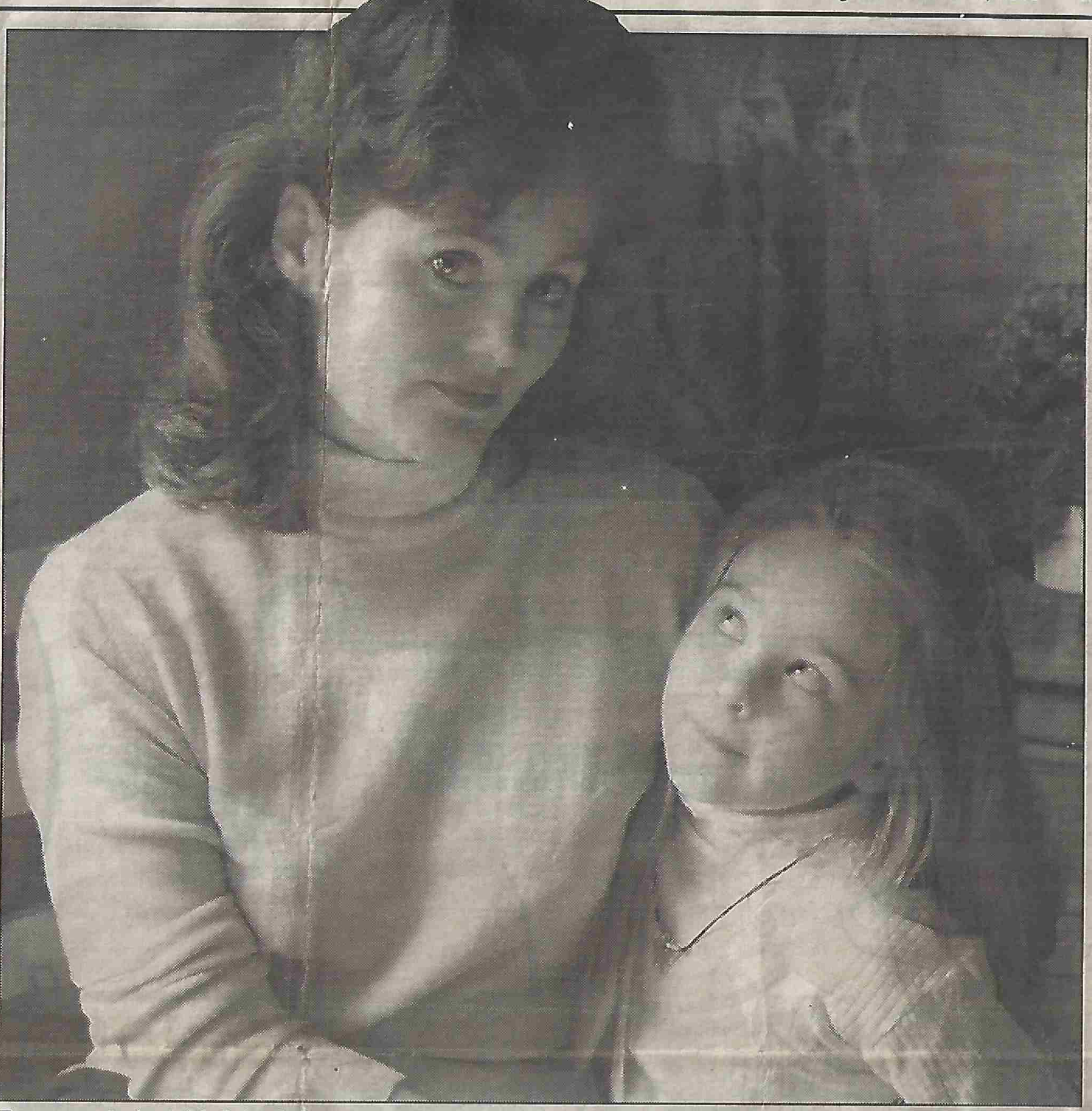
"My heart goes out to my husband, Stephen, because he has to work to support all three of us. My illness forced me to give up my job as a district nurse 18 months ago.

"When I'm ill, Stephen has to do all of my duties, as well as juggling his own career as a sales manager.

"I can't even ensure that he and Rebekah are provided for when I'm gone. Who is going to give me life insurance?

"Yet the Government seems to think our need for compensation is not strong enough."

Haemophilia, a bleeding disorder, is treated by injecting a blood-clotting product known as Factor VIII. In the early 1980s, it emerged that some haemophiliacs were being



Too young to be told: Colette's five-year-old daughter Rebekah doesn't know her mum's illness will one day take her away

ner swept ay in bid rescue pet

CE were yesterday ng for a dog owner who ept away while trying ue his pet from a river. orrified wife watched husband and the dog ulled downstream by ul currents after the got into difficulty.

uers were yesterday ng for the missing man. were joined by fire- , ambulance crews and ards.

ice spokeswoman said n was raised at 4.43pm ay by the man's wife, w her husband and et disappearing in the 'eifi, near Henllan,

river is in flood at the t and the man was way by the water," the nan said.

mmediately launched but were forced to call cause of fading light." ouple, who live locally, t been named.

A blood transfusion left me unable to pick up my little girl

that some haemophiliacs were being infected with HIV and hepatitis A and B through Factor VIII.

Inquiry

In 1984, Scotland became the first area of Britain to kill off viruses by heating blood products to 68C.

However, the process wasn't enough to kill off a new strain – hepatitis C, which was discovered in the late 1980s. Since 1987, those who contracted HIV through infected blood have received a total of £80 million compensation. But the Government has refused to recognise the needs of those with hepatitis C.

"How can they justify it?" asked Colette. "Hepatitis C kills, like HIV. It is contracted in the same way, through infected blood or sexual contact.

"People don't realise my condition is as life-threatening as being HIV-positive."

Scots sufferers were invited to send in written evidence last year after Health Minister Susan Deacon agreed to an internal inquiry.

The last evidence was submitted on December 31, and the Haemophilia Society is still awaiting her findings.

A debate on the subject will take place in Westminster on Tuesday, called by Tory MP Michael Mates.

Suffer

Female haemophiliacs are rare. Women can be carriers of the illness but it is normally men who suffer.

Close family: Colette and Stephen give Rebekah a hug

Colette was not diagnosed haemophiliac until she was 17, when she nearly lost her life after a tonsils operation at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

She lost a huge amount of blood and needed a transfusion of 11 units, as well as Factor VIII. That was when she was infected with hepatitis C, although it took years for her to be diagnosed.

She said: "The virus has a long incubation period, like HIV. You don't know you've got it until your condition starts to deteriorate."

Colette, from Blanefield, Stirlingshire, moved south at 23 to train as a nurse.

Amazingly, within months of settling in England, she received a further transfusion of infected blood, and this time contracted hepatitis B.

"I had to have an operation to straighten my back and was given more Factor VIII. Again, it was contaminated."

Although there is now a vaccine, hepatitis B was not treatable at the time. Colette had to wait for it to work its way through her system.

Two and a half years later, she was given the all-clear from hepatitis B.

Both hepatitis B and C have similar symptoms – chronic fatigue, nausea, digestion problems and jaundice. So doctors did not at first detect the more serious strain. It took until 1993 for Colette to realise she was still experiencing hepatitis symptoms.

Her doctor diagnosed the more serious, and incurable, hepatitis C.

By this time, she had been married for two years. She said: "I'd told Stephen about my haemophilia, and he knew I had suffered hepatitis B.

"But neither of us were aware when we married that I was dying from hepatitis C.

"There is a stigma attached to this condition. People will underestimate the seriousness or go over the top and treat sufferers like lepers."

Hepatitis C can be sexually transmitted, but thankfully, neither Stephen or Rebekah have it, although Rebekah is a haemophiliac.

Hepatitis C has killed 113 sufferers in Britain so far.

Although sufferers in Eire, Canada, Italy and Sweden have been compensated for contracting the virus through infected blood, Britain still refuses to do likewise.

Colette said: "Labour, before they got into power, pledged that they would compensate us. As soon as they were elected, they went back on their promise."

She was one of 10 delegates who went to Downing Street last December to push for compensation.

Fight

"We got fobbed off with the usual excuse, that it wasn't the Government's fault. So how come they have accepted responsibility for those who were infected with HIV under the same circumstances?"

Colette vows she will never give up the fight. Like many with hepatitis C, she simply has to hope justice doesn't come too late.

Anyone who wants more information on hepatitis C can call the British Liver Trust helpline: 0808 800 1000.

d.white@sundaymail.co.uk

THE SILENT KILLER

HEPATITIS C attacks the liver, causing inflammation and a risk of scarring, cirrhosis, or even liver cancer. In some cases, sufferers need a transplant.

It can also affect the immune system, and cause problems with other organs, including the kidneys. The amount of damage can vary. Some are lucky enough not to fall ill.

Between 20 and 25 per cent of sufferers develop cirrhosis or severe liver disease. Around 40 per cent have other problems. It can take 20 years or more for symptoms to show.

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Protest over hepatitis C

A YOUNG mother infected with hepatitis C from contaminated blood laid white lilies on the doorstep of 10, Downing Street last week to highlight the plight of herself and fellow sufferers.

Colette Wintle, of Tunbridge Wells is one of only a few women in the country who suffer from haemophilia, a condition usually only seen in men.

She was among a small group of people with haemophilia and MPs who laid 113 white lilies on the steps of Number 10 to remind the Prime Minister of the 113 people with haemophilia who have died so far as a result of their infection with hepatitis C.

Colette said: "I was infected with hepatitis C in Scotland in 1976, when I needed treatment for excessive bleeding after a routine tonsil operation went wrong."

She said at no time was she warned that the blood and blood products used in her treatment could infect her with blood-borne viruses.

She had to retire from her job as a nurse on ill health grounds because of the fatigue she felt, caused by hepatitis C and due to the side effects she experienced from treatment for the virus, which was unsuccessful.

She said: "My liver shows signs of active hepatitis C and my main concern is how my husband will cope if I die. We have one small child and are already finding it a struggle living on my husband's salary alone."

Last week's visit to Downing Street was to highlight the fact that although more than 4,000 people with haemophilia were infected with the virus by the NHS through treatment with contaminated blood clotting factors prior to 1986, the Government has ruled out the possibility of providing those infected with financial support and has ruled out the possibility of an inquiry into how and why the infection took place.

Karin Pappenheim, chief executive of the Haemophilia Society said: "This is an issue that needs urgent action from the Government. Many members previously signed Early Day motions in the House of Commons supporting our campaign, including Health Secretary, Alan Milburn.

"It is a scandal that Government has not responded properly on this issue, unlike governments in Ireland, Italy and Canada. We want urgent action now, before others die as a result of hepatitis C, in the form of a full inquiry and extension of the financial assistance scheme set up for people with haemophilia infected with HIV to include those infected with hepatitis C through contaminated blood products."

NOT RELEVANT

The Courier, March 30, 2001

KATHY LEEDS...

Left with hepatitis by blood scandal

BAD BLOOD: Seeking justice for people infected by blood products, Colette Wintle is off to Downing Street to hand over a letter to Tony Blair

TUNBRIDGE WELLS mum Colette Wintle will go to Downing Street on Tuesday seeking justice for a "national scandal" over infected blood products which has left her with both hepatitis C and B.

She will hand over a letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair, and a petition, highlighting a situation which she says has been covered up for years.

Colette will be one of six people, supported by their local MPs, as a delegation from a larger rally in London, taking the latest step in a campaign calling for a public inquiry, realistic compensation, and action to prevent a repeat of the events which have left her and her family with a question mark over the future.

"I will be holding a banner saying, 'Hepatitis C - it's bloody murder'. We are talking about involuntary genocide," she says.

Campaigners like Colette insist the authorities knew as early as the 1960s that blood products being imported from abroad were contaminated, a claim supported by senior doctors involved at the time.

Landmark

The action on Tuesday will take place in the wake of the landmark high court case won this week by 114 people infected through blood transfusions during the 1980s and 90s. "But not one haemophiliac was implicated in that compensation. I am so mad - here we have yet again another slap- in the face."

Colette was born with the genetic blood disorder haemophilia, which causes a failure of blood to clot when bleeding. Colette is also a carrier of the condition and her six-year-old daughter has inherited it too.

Two operations, one when Colette was 17, and one when she was trained as a nurse at 23, are what she suspects exposed her to hepatitis-infected blood products.

She has lost her career as a result, and had to retire even from a part-time job at the age of 38 because of the debilitating symptoms of the virus which affects the liver. "Normal activities are curtailed because of the exhaustion, but it is very difficult to explain to a six-year-old.

"I am lucky to have positive support from family and friends, but I am stigmatised for insurance purposes. It is difficult to plan for the future."

This is beside the ongoing challenge of haemophilia, being treated with the blood product Factor VIII, and being no stranger to spontaneous bleeds and blue-light ambulance exits from her home in the direction of the Royal Free hospital in London for treatment.

Colette has a sheaf of material gathered for the campaign, which has gained greater momentum after it was revealed some haemophiliacs (including herself) had been exposed to the risk of nvCJD from blood products, this on top of the known HIV/AIDS infections passed to haemophiliacs through blood products in the 1980s.

Fighting

"This CJD thing was the last straw. We are coming out fighting now."

She says answers are needed to a lot of questions, such as - when imported blood came from dubious sources such as Skid Row alcoholics and drug-users and prisoner donors in America, why were 1970s promises to make Britain self-sufficient not carried out?

Why did haemophiliac patients being compensated for HIV infection first have to sign away their rights with regard to other infections - before many of them even knew they had hepatitis, Colette asks? Why has the Irish government acted on the issue, provided six-figure compensation for hepatitis C infection to their haemophiliacs, and safe supplies of non-human derivative blood products, but the British Government hasn't?

Why can haemophiliacs even in Scotland and Wales be supplied with the safe product, but not in England?

"I keep myself going because I am so angry about what has happened.

"While I have the energy and focus to keep going, I am doing this for other people," says Colette, agreeing that there were implications for non-haemophiliacs too.

"I would be doing the British public a terrible disservice if I didn't tell them what has been going on."

Tunbridge Wells MP Archie Norman in pledging his support for Colette on Tuesday said: "Haemophiliacs through no fault of their own are forced to receive a derivative of human blood which puts them at risk of hepatitis and HIV. Furthermore they now run the gauntlet of CJD.

"Sufferers in Scotland and Wales receive the safe but more expensive non-human derivative product. It seems the Government wants minimal risk, as long as it comes at minimal cost."

Response from the Department of Health states: "The Government deeply regrets that so many haemophiliacs were infected with hepatitis C through blood products in the early 1980s.

"As soon as technology became available to make blood products free from hepatitis C the NHS introduced it.

"Government policy remains that compensation or other financial help to patients is only paid when the NHS, or individiuals working in it, are at fault.

"The Government feels that as all the information regarding this incident has been in the public domain for some time now, there would be little benefit in holding a public inquiry.

We are continuing to look at ways to improve services for those with haemophilia and hepatitis C."

Too little, too late

Storm over payouts for hepatitis C

By **Isabel Oakeshott**

A DECISION to compensate Scottish patients who contracted hepatitis C through contaminated blood was criticised yesterday for being 'too little too late'.

In a dramatic U-turn, Health Minister Susan Deacon announced plans to settle out of court with around 20 victims of the potentially fatal condition.

Until now, she has repeatedly refused to accept the case for compensation, claiming the NHS was not negligent when it gave the patients the tainted blood.

But her hand was forced after an English court ruled patients who received infected blood had been given 'defective products' and were entitled to massive payouts under the Consumer Protection Act.

Yesterday, the Minister admitted the Scottish courts would almost certainly agree, so she pledged to compensate Scottish patients with identical claims.

The decision represents an extraordinary climbdown by the Scottish Executive, which has always argued that compensation is inappropriate and would set a dangerous precedent.

'This still seems bitterly unfair'

Around 20 men and women who were given infected blood products after the Act came in can now expect to receive substantial payouts. But hundreds of haemophiliacs who received tainted blood before the Act was introduced in 1988 will not benefit.

Last night, campaigners branded Miss Deacon's decision a hollow victory, stressing the majority of victims would be no better off.

Philip Dolan, chairman of the Scottish Haemophilia Association, said: 'This is a small step in the right direction but it seems bitterly unfair that people who developed hepatitis C from infected blood before 1988 won't get anything while those who were infected after get payouts.

'How can the same blood be deemed okay one side of midnight, when Miss Deacon commissioned an inquiry which cleared the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service of blame.

In the past, she has argued the NHS was not negligent when it gave the patients contaminated blood products because no system was in place to screen the blood for the virus at the time.

The Health Minister continues to argue that it would not be in the interests of patients to create a 'risk-averse' NHS wherein doctors and other health professionals are reluctant to administer a treatment because of the consequences it might have.

But she was forced to reconsider her position earlier this year after the High Court in England awarded certain victims £10million under the Consumer Protection Act.

Nicola Sturgeon, health spokesman for the SNP, said: 'In cre-

Colette Wintle: Pre-1988 victim

Case study

COLETTE Wintle was 17 when she was first treated for haemophilia at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

A routine operation to remove her tonsils left her haemorrhaging and doctors gave her a blood-clotting agent to stem the flow.

Fifteen years later she was diagnosed with hepatitis C – and Mrs Wintle is in no doubt as to when she was infected.

Although the condition has forced her out of her job as a nurse and left her health severely damaged she, along with most other haemophiliacs, is unable to claim compensation against the health service.

'My first exposure to blood products was in 1976, when I had a tonsillectomy. They offered me clotting factor and I received all the blood derivatives that were being used at the time,' she said.

'It was being brought in from America and not one haemophiliac was told where the blood was sourced from or what the dangers would be.

'I was being offered a wonder treatment that would improve my life but it did nothing of the sort, it made my life worse.

'There is no haemophiliac in my position during that time who wasn't exposed to these products, and the infection rate was 100 per cent.'

Mrs Wintle, originally from Blanefield in Stirlingshire, moved to England at 23 to train as a nurse but was forced to leave the job when she was diagnosed with hepatitis C.

'I have lost my job as a nurse and I had to retire aged 38,' she said.

'I have lost my career and my health and my future prospects and I cannot claim any compensation.

'It's been totally devastating. It's wrecked every area of my life. It's also had a financial impact because of lost income.

'I'm angry and astonished that the Government has avoided having a public inquiry into the problem.

'I think we have a much stronger case for compensation because we have been exposed to these products for 30 years.'

ide: Your 4-page World Cup wallchart

Tunbridge Wells edition

The Kent and Sussex Courier

ished in 1872

Friday, May 24, 2002

50p

rting life in Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Rusthall, Pembury, Bidborough and local villages

ected haemophiliac campaigns for fellow victims

want inquiry nto our plight

By **Sarah Buck**

A HAEMOPHILIAC from Tunbridge Wells, who says she contracted a deadly disease at Pembury Hospital, is demanding answers from the Government.

Colette Wintle, 42, believes she caught Hepatitis B in 1982 after receiving infected plasma, a blood clotting agent, from a consultant haemotologist at the hospital.

At that time she was already infected with Hepatitis C, following similar treatment at the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow.

Pembury Hospital ordered plasma, called Factor VIII, from the Blood

records for blood products as far back as 1989. Twenty years ago there were no requirements to record batch numbers. There is no evidence that Mrs Wintle contracted Hepatitis C from Factor VIII administered by the hospital."

Tunbridge Wells MP Archie Norman, who has had several meetings with Mrs Wintle, said: "Faced with the tragedy of a relatively small group of people suffering from a chronic illness as a direct result of NHS treatment, my instinct is that there is a case for compensation or at least financial assistance."

But for former nurse Mrs Wintle,

NOT RELEVANT

NER: Haemophiliac Colette Wintle says she contracted at Pembury Hospital

Pembury Hospital ordered plasma, called Factor VIII, from the Blood Transfusion Service and various commercial companies knowing it had come from high risk donors, Mrs Wintle claims. The hospital says there is no evidence to support her assertions.

Now, she says, thousands of haemophiliacs in the UK could be infected with HIV as well as hepatitis.

She said: "They imported blood products from the United States where, for example, drug addicts and prisoners were allowed to be donors. No one ever mentioned the risks involved with my treatment. I, along with thousands of other sufferers, have been used as a guinea pig."

The Stephens Road resident, who has twice petitioned Downing Street, is now calling for a public inquiry.

She said: "When I contacted Pembury Hospital to see my files I was told records for blood products are only held as far back as 1989. There has been a cover-up on a national scale and I want answers."

Spokeswoman for Maidstone and NHS Trust Colette Glasson said there had been no wrongdoing on the part of Pembury Hospital.

She said: "The trust has explained to Mrs Wintle that our Blood Transfusion Unit only holds patient issue

But for former nurse Mrs Wintle, whose ill health forced her to take early retirement four years ago, it is too little too late.

The mother-of-one said: "The UK is the only part of Europe not to address this problem. Hepatitis C can take up to 20 years to manifest so some people may not yet know they are infected.

"I am seeking justice for them and all those whose lives have been ruined by infected blood. The Government investigates other disasters, why will they not look into this one?"

FACTFILE

- **Hepatitis is a disease of the liver.**
- **Symptoms of hepatitis C include jaundice, nausea and fatigue.**
- **It can be treated with chemotherapy but there is no known cure.**
- **Many hepatitis B carriers suffer rheumatism as a side effect.**
- **People can be vaccinated against the disease, however, the body often naturally produces antibodies to fight it.**

GE GUIDE TO PREPARING YOUR GARDEN FOR THE JUBILEE ter 2,000 deaths and another 4,000 cases of HIV and hepatitis...

Politicians may face criminal charges over infected blood

SIVE

Johnston

itor

ORMER Tory and Labour ministers could face criminal charges over the use of contaminated blood in the ich infected thousands 7 and hepatitis C.

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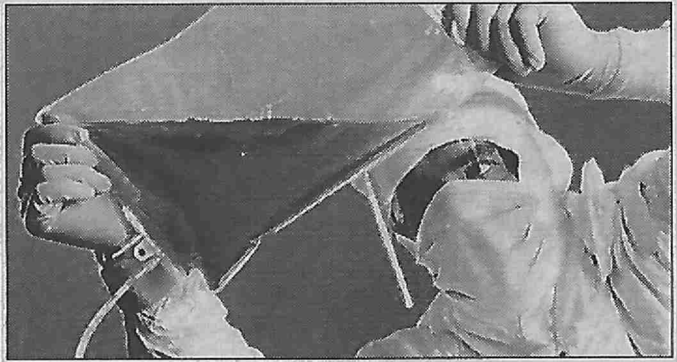

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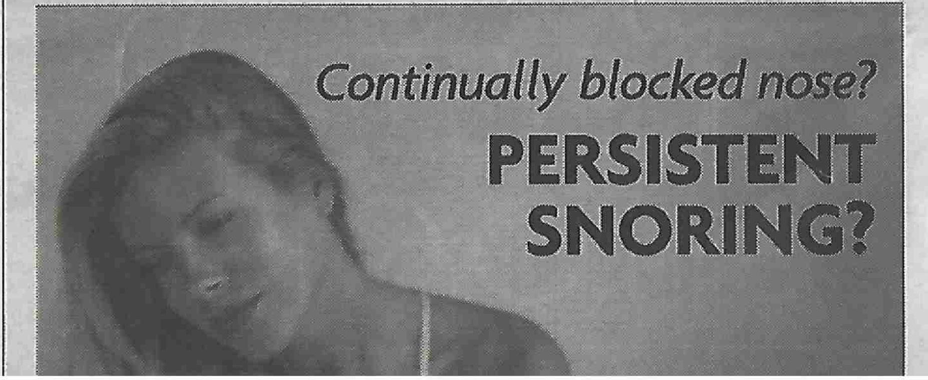



VICTIM: Haemophiliac Colette Wintle was infected with hepatitis from contaminated blood

So far up to 2,000 have died and another 4,000 are infected or dying. Pregnant women and individuals undergoing operations were among those given infected blood.

But most at risk were haemophiliacs who were repeatedly injected with unsafe imported blood-clotting products.

One victim was Colette Wintle, 43, from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, who was infected with hepatitis B and C in 1982 from blood products used to treat her haemophilia.

The former nurse said: "I am in constant pain and often exhausted. I am terrified about my future. I have the most lethal and difficult-to-treat type of hepatitis C."

Mr Grange's move follows the convictions of former health ministers in Italy, France and Japan.

Last night he said: "This could well be a scandal. If the allegations in the documents are true we may have to involve criminal law."

The new legal move comes as the Government orders hospitals to import US blood supplies to ensure children under six are not infected with CJD, the human form of mad cow disease.

Furious health campaigners say American blood has an appalling contamination record and point to recent evidence of US safety violations.

Mr Grange will examine Government memos, internal blood company documents and secret reports from the Government's Public Health Service Laboratory which reveal UK health officials have long ignored warnings that blood products were dangerous. Some of these documents have been seen by the Sunday Express.

One, dated May 1983, from the PHSL to the Health Department, advised immediate withdrawal of all US blood products because they had caused three HIV infections in haemophiliacs. They never were.

ANOTHER is a letter from an American hepatitis expert to the Government Blood Products Laboratory, dated July 1975. It warned US blood was taken from high-risk groups such as prisoners and "skid-row derelicts" and was "extraordinarily hazardous".

The letter stated the hepatitis infection rate from this blood was up to 90 per cent. Another letter, dated July 1981, from the Department of Health to a senior member of the Treasury expressed concern "because of the hepatitis risk".

Carol Grayson, from Haemophilia Action UK, said: "Successive Governments have not ensured blood products are safe. We have no option but to seek a criminal investigation."

Peter Mossman, a campaigner and victim, added: "We have met health ministers over the years but none have given us answers. We have no alternative."

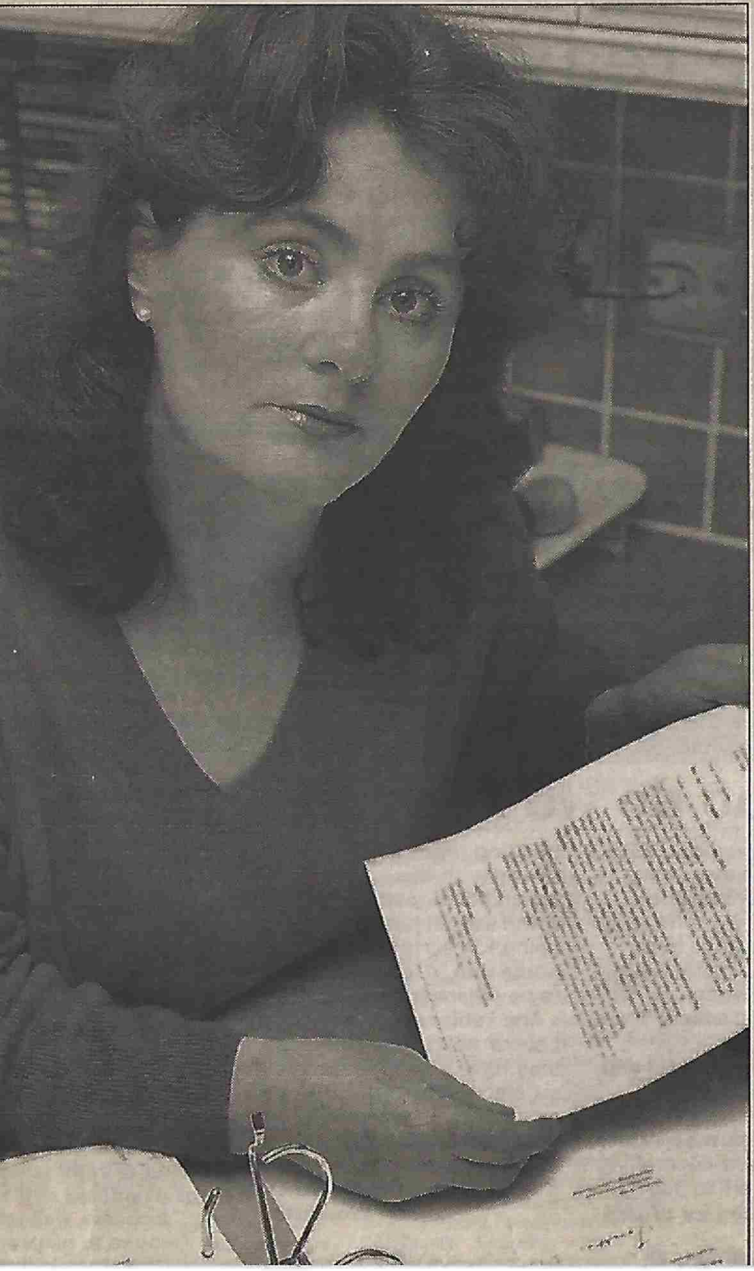
In the past there have been several moves to compensate victims but nobody has accepted liability.

In 1987, former Labour health minister Lord Owen asked for an investigation but was told files had been "pulped".

A Department of Health spokeswoman said: "The technology to make blood products free from HIV and hepatitis C was not available until the mid-Eighties. As soon as it was we introduced it."

OPINION: PAGE 22

HEALTH: Missing medical records hit fight for compensation



Bitter blow to sufferer's campaign for pay-out

by RICHARD BABINGTON
Evening News

A HAEMOPHILIAC who claims to have been infected with hepatitis during a tonsil operation could miss out on compensation because of lost medical records.

Colette Wintle was given the blood drug Factor 8 after a tonsil operation in 1976.

The drug, which is a bloodclotting agent, had been imported from America and had been gathered from high-risk donors such as prisoners and drug addicts.

Mrs Wintle, a 43-year-old former model, airhostess and nurse, was struck down by hepatitis C and had to retire from work five years ago.

She had been hoping to win compensation through an American law firm that specialises in taking action against pharmaceutical companies.

She decided to take action after the Government refused to open a public inquiry into why more than 3,000 haemophiliacs were exposed to hepatitis and HIV.

However, Mrs Wintle, of Sling

without her medical records.

"It will affect the litigation but I don't know to what extent," she said. "I have been asking the American lawyers about it."

Blood has been tested for hepatitis C since 1985. The Department of Health said the NHS was not at fault, but Health Minister Malcolm Chisholm has urged patients who cannot trace their records to contact his department immediately.

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Last Updated: Wednesday, 28 May, 2003, 08:01 GMT 09:01 UK

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Compensation claim jeopardised

A haemophiliac who says she was infected with hepatitis C from a contaminated blood product could miss out on thousands of pounds of compensation.

Colette Wintle is crippled by hepatitis C

Colette Wintle, from Lower Broadheath, Worcestershire, was given the blood drug Factor 8 after a routine tonsil operation at Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 1976.

The 43-year-old former model, air hostess and nurse, has been left crippled by chronic hepatitis C.

Lawyers have until the end of this week to file a claim for compensation against the pharmaceutical companies accused of supplying the NHS with clotting agents contaminated with hepatitis C and HIV.

'Health compromised'

But Mrs Wintle has been told she cannot pursue compensation because Glasgow Royal Infirmary has lost her records.

She said: "I feel very angry my life, my health and my family's life has been so compromised."

Mrs Wintle added the claims for compensation had come about because the government had refused to open up a public inquiry into why more than 3,000 haemophiliacs were exposed to hepatitis viruses and HIV.

"I feel very angry that just because I was born with a congenital defect it does not mean that I should have been laid open to such experimentation by doctors who were looking after me."

Health minister Malcolm Chisholm has urged patients whose records have been lost or destroyed to contact his department immediately.

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IT HAPPENED TO ME

My life was ruined by infected blood

JOHN CARTER

Congratulations to The Mail on Sunday for the article on the scandal of infected blood that has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 haemophiliacs.

It is not before time that the General Medical Council is investigating exactly when doctors first became aware of the dangers of certain blood-clotting products imported from America.

I'm a haemophiliac and have hepatitis C because of infected clotting factors with which I've been treated. I suffer terrible fatigue and have had to give up my nursing career. The virus may well kill me.

I believe that haemotologists knew about the risks of using commercial blood products as long ago as the early Seventies but failed to pass on the information to patients.

I have struggled over the past two years to access my medical blood records and have met with constant obstruction. What possible excuse can be given to explain why doctors and hospital trusts are so reluctant to hand over this information to patients?

I am furious that my health and my life have been severely compromised. The public has a right to know the extent to which the Government, NHS and doctors have gone to cover up this scandal.

Colette Wintle
Birmingham

Has anything like this week's news happened to you? Write and tell us

father in an attempt to rewrite history, and because securing Iraq's oil and the stability of the West would increase his political standing. So what's in it for Britain? Tony Blair and Labour are in such a mess over immigration that they are in danger of losing the next

do and guidelines for behaviour should be laid down and the reasons explained. They should be told that if they are naughty they will be punished, and that good behaviour will be rewarded.

L. A. Parry

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Last Updated: Wednesday, 28 May, 2003, 07:16 GMT 08:16 UK

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Compensation fears over missing records

Patients in Scotland who were given contaminated blood products from America could miss out on thousands of pounds in compensation because hospitals have lost their records.

The blood products were used in the early 1980s

Lawyers have until the end of this week to file a claim for compensation against the pharmaceutical companies accused of supplying the NHS with clotting agents contaminated with hepatitis C and HIV.

In the early 1980s Scottish supplies of a clotting factor for patients with blood disorders ran low, and the NHS imported it from America.

American Factor 8 was gathered from high-risk donors, such as prisoners and drug-addicts.

Clotting agent

It is believed that all the Scottish patients who received the blood were infected with hepatitis C, and in some cases HIV.

A joint action for compensation against the pharmaceutical companies involved is now imminent, but patients need to prove they were given the American clotting agent before they can take part.

Health Minister Malcolm Chisholm has instructed hospitals to hand over all relevant medical records, but some NHS trusts now say these have been lost.

American laws mean that all claims must be filed by the end of this week, and it looks likely that this opportunity for compensation will be closed to many patients forever.

Those affected include Colette Wintle, who was treated with a clotting agent in the 1970s and 1980s for a hereditary disorder.

" I feel very angry that just because I was born with a congenital defect it does not mean that I should have been

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> **laid open to such experimentation by doctors** ❞
>
> Colette Wintle

The former model, air hostess and nurse has been left crippled by hepatitis C, which she believes she contracted from contaminated blood which probably came from America.

However, she cannot pursue compensation because Glasgow Royal Infirmary has lost her records.

"I feel very angry that just because I was born with a congenital defect it does not mean that I should have been laid open to such experimentation by doctors who were looking after me," she said.

"They should have been offering me the best and safest treatment available at the time and giving me an informed choice on that treatment.

Handed over

"That was denied me and the way I see it now, they have obstructed any possibility of justice within the United Kingdom."

Mr Chisholm told BBC Scotland that he had made it clear to health authorities that records must be handed over.

He urged patients whose records have been lost or destroyed to contact his department immediately.

Thousands of haemophiliacs in the UK were infected with hepatitis C after receiving tainted blood products in the 1970s and 1980s.

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WORCESTER: Woman will testify at inquiry into contamination

Blood-illness mum tells of her ordeal

BY LAUREN MURRAY
01905 742251
lm@worcesternews.co.uk

A WOMAN who contracted hepatitis B and C from contaminated blood is due to give evidence about her ordeal at a public inquiry today.

Colette Wintle contracted the potentially life-threatening diseases while having NHS treatment for haemophilia during the 1970s.

Today the 47-year-old is due to give evidence at a national independent public inquiry into how the contamination of a UK blood supply happened and why thousands of people contracted HIV and hepatitis as a result.

"I am suffering from liver disease and a number of health problems," said Mrs Wintle, of Sling Lane, Lower Broadheath, Worcester.

"These have placed an emotional and financial strain on my family.

"The haemophilia community has never had an apology from the Government and we were not informed about the high risks of blood-borne viruses involved in our treatment.

"I want to know who was responsible for allowing importation of contaminated blood products, exactly how this took place and what systems are in place to ensure it cannot happen again."

Mrs Wintle – a former model, nurse and air hostess – was forced to give up work due to her healthy problems and has

Colette Wintle will give evidence today to a public inquiry into how she and others were given tainted blood, leading to them catching diseases such as hepatitis. Picture by John Anyon. 21042601

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importation of contaminated blood products, exactly how this took place and what systems are in place to ensure it cannot happen again.”

Mrs Wintle – a former model, nurse and air hostess – was forced to give up work due to her healthy problems and has been campaigning for an inquiry for the past 15 years.

“It has been very difficult,” she said. “Some of us have managed to help and support one another but the British public now needs to know the lengths that several Governments have gone to keep this quiet and cover the whole thing up.”

The mother-of-one said those who have had to live with these diseases deserve to be awarded compensation.

“It won’t remove or repair the damage done but it will help them support their dependants, who are deeply effected,” she said.

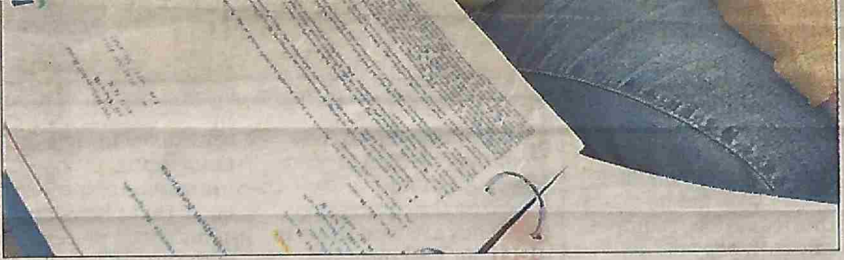
The independent inquiry, taking place in London, is being chaired by former Solicitor General Lord Archer of Sandwell.

It will investigate the circumstances surrounding the supply of contaminated blood, the consequences for those affected and suggest steps for the future.

Roddy Morrison, chairman of the Haemophilia Society, said: “We have been campaigning for an inquiry into this for the last 19 years.

“During that time there has never been an opportunity for the patients to speak or for all of the issues to be examined in the open.

“We hope that now all of the facts will be brought to light and that all those involved – from Government ministers to those infected – will give evidence.”



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Contaminated blood inquiry: sufferer backs panel's ruling

A WOMAN who contracted hepatitis B and C from contaminated blood has welcomed the results of an independent inquiry which condemned the inaction of successive governments.

Colette Wintle, aged 49, of Sling Lane, Lower Broadheath, contracted the potentially fatal diseases while having NHS treatment for haemophilia during the 1970s.

Yesterday she was in London to listen to Labour peer Lord Archer of Sandwell announce the results of the independent public inquiry into the supply of contaminated blood products.

"I think it is right that Lord Archer has decided, along with his panel, that there has been abject failure from the outset and lack of government will and self sufficiency," Ms Wintle said.

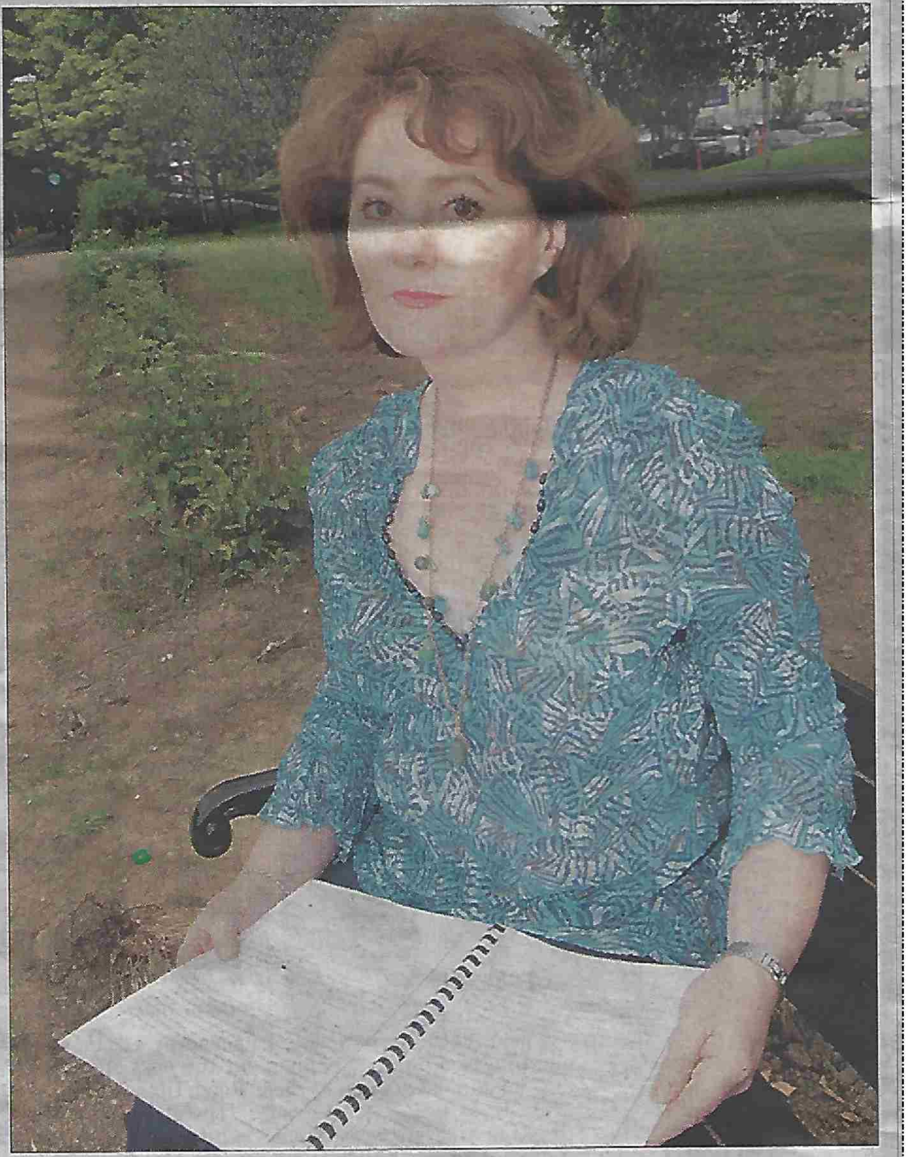
"It is the Government's moral responsibility to respond now to the suffering."

The former model was one of 4,670 patients who received blood transfusions in the 1970s and 1980s that were infected with hepatitis C. Some also contracted HIV.

The report noted there was a "lethargic" progress towards national self-suffiency in blood products in England and Wales.

As a result the NHS bought blood from US suppliers who used prison inmates as donors.

The report concluded: "Commercial priorities should never again override the interests of public health."



REPORT: Colette Wintle has welcomed the results of the public inquiry. 24424702

A series of recommendations have now been made which include testing all blood donors after they give blood and paying all the victims compensation.

COMMENT: PAGE 6

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Secretary to the inquiry Maria McCann read his statement, which said repeatedly that there were "no reasonable precautions" which could have been taken between 1970 and 1991.

But the Haemophilia Society said they were "shocked and disappointed" by the report.

They said much of the tainted blood had been imported, and hundreds of lives could have been saved if ministers had acted in the 1970s to make Britain self-sufficient in blood products.

Tainted blood caused illness all over Britain but Scotland was the only UK nation to hold an inquiry.

The patients were infected before devolution, and David Cameron apologised to "each and every one of those people".

The Prime Minister told MPs: "I would like to say sorry on behalf of the Government for something that should not have happened."

Cameron said the Government would improve the way victims are compensated, and pledged £25million for the scheme next year.

Maria McCann from The Penrose Report team reads the report as it is published

Scotland's Health Secretary Shona Robison said: "I would like to say sorry to everyone who has been affected by this terrible tragedy. We recognise how catastrophic this was for everyone affected.

"While this was a UK, indeed international, issue, I hope today's report means those affected in Scotland have at least some of the answers they have long called for."

Victims at the report launch were not impressed.

Hep C sufferer Colette Wintle, 55, originally from Stirlingshire, was outraged that Lord Penrose expressed sympathy in his statement for the doctors and nurses who gave the tainted blood.

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She said: "I feel utterly shocked there was more sympathy for the clinicians than the victims. Lord Penrose has shown us absolutely no compassion.

"Not a single person has been held to account and sent to jail. It was well known in medical circles there were risks."

Adrian Goodyear, 44, has HIV and hep C. His brother died of AIDS and his brother has Hep C, all from blood transfusions.

He said: "An entire generation was wiped out. We hoped today would be it, the day we got action. I can't believe he didn't deliver."

Try our quick news quiz below:

Question - 1 of 5 Score - 0 of 0

Which TV presenter has NOT been touted to replace Jeremy Clarkson on Top Gear?

- Jimmy Carr
- Graham Norton
- Chris Evans

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Heartbroken girlfriend who saw childhood sweetheart stabbed to death on night out reveals her endless torment

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Heartbroken girlfriend who saw childhood sweetheart stabbed to death on night out reveals her endless torment

Government compensation long overdue

11:03 03 July 2015

Emma Youle

An estimated 7,000 people were treated with contaminated blood or blood products up until 1991 and more than 2,000 have since died

The Ham&High's investigation has highlighted the many ways local victims of the NHS contaminated blood scandal continue to be failed decades on. Now investigations editor David Powles and journalist Emma Youle outline the improvements badly needed

reddit this!

Comment

"Penrose did say that the Nuremberg Code was broken, the research was done illegally. He said it was ok because everybody else was doing it, but he didn't deny it was happening"

Bruce Norval, campaigner

You would be hard pressed to find a group of people as repeatedly let down by the state as the thousands affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

Colette Wintle traced the batches of blood products that infected her with hepatitis C

For whatever reason, be it to save cash or with good intentions at heart, the decision of the British government to import and use unchecked blood and blood products in the UK right up until 1991 was a terrible mistake.

But for those products to continue to be used for several years after the potential dangers were known is nothing short of neglect.

Former Royal Free patient Bruce Norval, was infected with hep C through blood factor treatment for haemophilia.

He has spent the last 25 years campaigning to bring information to light and gave evidence to Scotland's Penrose Inquiry into contaminated blood.

The government's response

We put a series of questions to the Department of Health.

On the many failings perceived

"We understand how distressing this scandal has been for those affected and their families, and the prime minister has apologised to all those that were infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C (hep C) through treatment with NHS-supplied blood or blood products before 1991.

Over the last two decades various schemes have been set up to provide financial assistance to these people and, to date, over £365million has been paid out in the UK. In recent years, the Department of Health has put over £70million more into the system (over the course of the last parliament) targeting resources at those in need.

However, we know that many people remain unhappy with the current support, and we are working on what can be done to improve it. The prime minister has announced an additional one-off payment of £25million to help those who have been affected, and we are considering how to use it."

Will there be a public inquiry in this country into the scandal?

"There will not be another public inquiry following the independent public inquiry chaired by Lord Penrose in March 2015 because it would delay victims and their families in getting the support they need."

Why have there been no prosecutions sought?

"With the exceptions of cases where compensation has been paid out under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, no liability or fault has ever been proven or accepted in a court of law. Successive governments have, however, voluntarily established financial assistance schemes for those affected."

How does the government intend to spread education and awareness so these people can receive treatment when needed?

"There have been two look-back exercises with the aim of tracking those with bleeding disorders that may have been infected with hep C from NHS provided blood products, as well as those infected with HIV and hep C.

If anyone is concerned that they may have been infected with hep C they should contact their GP, a sexual health clinic, or a drug treatment service, all of which offer testing for hep C."

His unflinching belief, after decades of research, is that doctors knew of the risks from a virus then known as non-A non-B hepatitis in blood products and continued to give it to haemophiliacs to see how infectious it was. He says the Nuremberg Code, governing research ethics for human experimentation, was broken.

"Documents used in the Penrose evidence describe haemophilia blood products as 'mass inoculation'," he says. "The idea was to find out how much disease they could expose people to before it became a problem to the general populous.

"It was a nasty germ warfare kind of experiment.

"Penrose did say that the Nuremberg Code was broken, the research was done illegally. He said it was ok because everybody else was doing it, but he didn't deny it was happening."

Even if the risk of contracting viruses had to be balanced against the risks of non-treatment for haemophiliacs, he and many others believe the choice should have been theirs. Victims say there was no informed medical consent.

If, since then, all had been done to make the lives of those poisoned as simple and pain-free as possible, this would probably be a matter that could be consigned to the history books. But this stain lingers.

While it may be too late for criminal prosecution to be brought against anyone found to have been involved in those early, ill-fated decisions, it is entirely understandable that campaigners feel bitter at a lack of accountability.

Female haemophiliac Colette Wintle did not receive regular treatment, unlike male sufferers, and so has been able to trace the infected batches of factor VIII blood clotting treatment she was given, including one at the Royal Free Hospital in 1985.

The 55-year-old, who contracted hep C, says: "This batch was known to them to be infected because I subsequently took a case up against the manufacturers in the States and the lawyers confirmed that the batch they gave me was on the list of contaminated batches in America.

"At that point the haemophilia doctors' organisation had had discussions about taking the products off the shelf.

"In many cases doctors just continued to use up the product even though they knew it was going to infect their patients."

Twenty years later she confronted a doctor who had treated her at another hospital. "I said 'But you must have known these products were infected by then?'" says Colette.

"And he actually looked me square in the eye and said 'Yes, but it was an oversight, I forgot to tell you about the risks'."

We support the campaign group's calls for a public inquiry into the events that led to the tragedies to ensure lessons are learned.

The least these people deserve is to have their day in a public forum.

But what good is an inquiry if sufferers and their families have to continue to live in poverty because illnesses caused by government mistakes make them unable to provide for themselves?

In the Republic of Ireland, victims received an acceptable lump sum payment for their agony and pain, along with regular support. That should happen in England too.

It is estimated such a payout would cost £1.5billion, roughly the same compensation given to victims of the Equitable Life financial scandal.

On top of this, consistent levels of financial support need to be given to hep C sufferers, no matter how serious the government believes their health problems to be.

That also needs to apply to widows and families.

It is too late for the devastation caused by this scandal to be undone. But, with a new government in place, it's about time some of the damage is at least repaired.

See next week's ***Ham&High***: How safe are blood products today?

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Farm signs

AN application has been nade for new illuminated ind non-illuminated signs at ı farm in Worcester.

As well as permission for he new signs, the applicant nas asked Worcester City Council to be able to repaint vooden planking at Manor Farm, Malvern Road.

Garage plan

A PLAN to convert a garage nto a new entry hall at a nome in St John's has been ubmitted.

The application to Vorcester City Council also isks for permission for a new garage and a new ensuite bedroom over the top.

The home is in Laugherne Road and the applicant is Vivid Blue Designs.

Shop front

ARDEN Estates of Bromsgrove has applied for ermission to alter the shop ront and install new signs at enkins House, 15 Foregate Street, Worcester.

'It's our last chance'


SCANDAL: Colette Wintle has campaigned for more than 25 years


By Sam **Greenway**

A KEY victim of the infected blood scandal says she is open minded but cautious about the outcome of a new inquiry which is now underway.

Colette Wintle, of Martley, who has haemophilia, was infected with hepatitis C twice, and hepatitis B in hospitals in Scotland, Kent and London in the 1970s and 80s.

She is a key participant in the inquiry - the first UK-wide public inquiry able to compel witnesses to testify about the scandal, labelled the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS.

Mrs Wintle is set to appear at the inquiry next week. It began hearing evidence in central London earlier this week, with its chairman, former High Court judge Sir Brian Langstaff, thanking victims for their bravery, and promising the inquiry would be "frightened of no-one."

"I understand some simply cannot bring themselves to make a statement because it is too much," he added.

Mrs Wintle, who described herself as a veteran of two previous "whitewash" inquiries, said: "This is the final chance to finally have the truth be reported correctly.

"I fear though it could take years - three years possibly.

"But people are dying, several hundreds have died since this inquiry was announced.

"The inquiry has turned into a monster because it will hear evidence from two groups, those infected, and haemophiliacs who were treated like guinea pigs.

"It's about transparency - that is what I and other victims long for."

. The 59-year-old said she was hopeful the inquiry would give the victims a voice, that there would be recognition for their extreme pain and suffering, and recompense for financial losses.

Mrs Wintle will give evidence on Friday, May 10. After the inquiry hears from victims, there will be similar testimonies taking place across the country.