

FOR THE ATTENTION OF JO KNOWSLEY.

Secretary of State for Health  
John Reid  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Mrs Colette Wintle

GRO-C

02-09-03

Dear Mr Reid,

I am writing to express my dismay regarding your announcement last week that you have decided to compensate haemophiliacs and other victims of contaminated blood products, with what I and many others who have campaigned for a long time consider to be a paltry sum of money. I am a Haemophiliac lady and a victim of multiple exposures to Hepatitis viruses through my NHS treatment. I was first exposed to Hepatitis in 1976 in Scotland, where as a minor and without my parents consent or knowledge I was injected with clotting products made by two well known pharmaceutical companies who notoriously sourced their blood from American prisoners. I am devastated by that discovery which I only found out about two months ago after exhaustive pressure on the hospital trust involved. They eventually provided me with my records, but only because the media were involved! I was further infected with Hepatitis Band C at two more hospitals in England, one of which has eradicated vital blood records illegally and failed to log records of my contaminated plasma infusions on the national haemophilia database! Imagine how you would feel if you or family members were to have experienced the same disgraceful treatment.

I have suffered terribly as a result of these viruses and was forced to retire from employment five years ago at the age of 38. My family life has been ruined and I fear what will happen to me in the future due to the alarming amount of deaths occurring within the Haemophilia community as a result of these viruses.

I believe haemophiliacs in particular have very good reason to be deserving of a far larger compensation package than the derisory sum of £20,000 suggested, because historically they have been infected with killer viruses since commercial US plasma was first introduced in their treatment in 1973. I am very well informed on what the government and Department of Health as well as the treating Haematologists knew about the dangers of using these products, and have actively campaigned for a public inquiry for many years. I am well supported in government and the House of Lords in the need for an explanation as to why this treatment disaster was ever allowed to happen. It is scandalous that many of our European cousins in Eire, France and Italy have acknowledged the harm and damage done to their haemophiliacs and have properly compensated them with substantial pay outs. Why does the British government refuse to do the same? Can you explain to me why the lives of GRO-C affected by HIV/HCV in Eire, are more valuable than mine? I would like you to consider the financial losses I have incurred due to my viruses. The loss of twenty years of earning power, unable to get life insurance cover,

the ruination of my quality of life and the damage to my health and the effect it has on family. It is utterly derisory and an insult to think that I should accept anything less than parity with what my cousins were given which was a six figure sum.

Consider how galling it is as a victim to read about a criminal recently who sustained a minor injury whilst serving his time, and who having recovered from it went on to gain compensation of £250,000 for loss of potential earnings. How can that be considered fair, and were you to look at this properly on moral and compassionate grounds you would be placing the issues that I have highlighted as a far higher priority for infected haemophiliacs. I am sure you are aware that 1300 haemophiliacs have already lost their lives and there will be many more deaths to follow.

The quest for a public inquiry and those responsible for causing the harm to my life and that of fellow haemophiliacs will go on, and unless the government are prepared to listen to our requests, we will continue to fight on. I am sure you are aware that there are legal representatives in the US taking cases forward on behalf of British victims, against the US plasma companies who produced contaminated blood products. It is only a matter of time before all of the information involved in this scandal will be revealed, so it is in the interest of the government be seen to address compensation on a more realistic scale for infected haemophiliacs. I enclose a news story from 1989 covering the HIV scandal and the derisory sum of £20,000 which was suggested then was considered appallingly unjust. There is no getting away from the fact that paltry offerings such as are being currently suggested are completely disproportionate to the nature of the extreme harm and damage caused by these viruses. Until that is acknowledged, as other governments have already done then haemophiliacs are not receiving a fair and deserved settlement.

I fully accept that you personally are not responsible for what has taken place, and you have indeed inherited an awful blood scandal that goes back through several Conservative and Labour governments. However you do have an opportunity to finally give British haemophiliacs the recognition they deserve for their suffering and ultimately the opportunity to get on with what is left of their lives, and bring some form of closure to what is a living hell for many. I am appealing to you to put right a very serious wrongdoing, and would appreciate a meeting with you and my campaign colleague Carol Grayson at the Department of Health as soon as possible. We have previously met with your predecessor Philip Hunt and we would like the opportunity to show you documents that fully support the need for a public inquiry and a proper compensation package.

I hope that you will give this full consideration and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Colette Wintle