

PO1018214

Greg Pope MP

Dear Greg,

15 JAN 2003

Thank you for your letter of 24 October on behalf of your constituent Mr Martin Theaker of **GRO-C** Lancashire about people with haemophilia who have contracted hepatitis C through infected blood products. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I was sorry to read that Mr Theaker suffers from haemophilia and hepatitis C. The government takes the issue of those people who have suffered through contaminated blood products very seriously and has great sympathy for anyone who has suffered harm as a result of NHS treatment.

Mr Theaker has asked about a compensation scheme for those haemophiliacs who were infected with hepatitis C. We deeply regret that so many people with haemophilia were infected with hepatitis C through blood products. But the fact is that as soon as a technology became available to make blood products free from hepatitis C the NHS introduced it. There is therefore no legal liability to justify compensation for people with haemophilia and hepatitis C.

I met with The Haemophilia Society and members of the All Party Group on Haemophilia last year about the Society's report that provides costed proposals for financial assistance for those with haemophilia who contracted hepatitis C. I agreed to consider the report in detail and provide the Society with a full response in due course.

Your constituent has also asked for a public inquiry into this issue. The facts have been set out clearly on many occasions through debates in both Houses, at meetings with Department of Health Ministers and in correspondence. Whilst the Government has great sympathy for those infected with hepatitis C and has considered the call for a public inquiry very carefully, all the information is in the public domain and we do not think it is the way forward.

Yours,
GRO-C

MS HAZEL BLEARS