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# Aids-free blood centre & 'starved by cash limits'

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The Government has restricted the budget of the only laboratory in England producing the vital blood clotting factor for haemophiliacs, a union has claimed, amid fears contaminated with the disease Aids, which can be fatal.

Supplies of the comparatively safe home-produced Factor VIII are threatened, and the programme to make Britain self-sufficient by 1985 is being delayed, said Mr Clive Jenkins, general secretary of ASTMS, the union representing technicians at the Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree, Herts.

The Central Blood Laboratories Authority, which operates the laboratory, has been told to keep to health service cash limits, which would mean an increase of only 5 per cent this year. But the authority fears that this will be insufficient to keep pace with the rising cost of medical equipment let alone to expand production.

Mr Jenkins claimed that managers at the laboratory had been told to cut their budgets by 10 per cent.

Two haemophiliacs in London and Cardiff are reported to have contracted Aids—acquired immune deficiency



Clive Jenkins: make trading in blood illegal

syndrome—from contaminated Factor VIII from the United States. The cases have not been confirmed, but the Social Services Secretary, Mr Norman Fowler, will be asked by Labour MPs what steps he is taking to ban imports of contaminated blood.

Aids is thought to be caused by an unidentified mutant virus which destroys victims' defences may die from infections like herpes and pneumonia and of the skin cancer Kaposi's Sarcoma. It can be transmitted in whole fresh blood and in Factor

VIII and there is no way to detecting or destroying it. More than 1,350 US homosexuals have the disease and 14 cases have been officially confirmed among British homosexuals.

Britain's 4,500 haemophiliacs need 100 million units of Factor VIII a year. More than 70 million units are imported, mostly from the US. The Government is injecting £20 million into the Blood Products Laboratory in an attempt to make Britain self-sufficient by 1985.

Backed by the Labour leader, Mr Michael Foot, ASTMS has launched a campaign to ban all imports of blood from paid donors because of the risks of infection. "In the US people sell blood to buy food to make blood which is often contaminated," said Mr Jenkins. "You can only have effective controls if the blood is donated as an act of social responsibility. We want all trading in blood to be declared illegal."

The Department of Health said: "In line with other centrally funded services, the Central Blood Laboratories Authority's budget has been increased by 5 per cent. We are aware that the authority is concerned about the revenue allocation and the department will be discussing this with the authority in the near future."

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