

30th April 2002

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RE-DOH STATEMENT ON THE 'YOU AND YOURS' RADIO 4 PROGRAM

Dear Ms Cooper,

I am writing with regard to the statement made by the Department of Health on the BBC Radio 4 "You and Yours" programme on the 30th April 2002, the subject of haemophiliacs infected with HIV and hepatitis C through their treatment products.

Once again the Department Of Health has got its facts wrong with regard to Eire as I have pointed out previously on a number of occasions. The Government of Eire has NOT paid out compensation to Irish haemophiliacs because negligence has been proven. There may well be negligence, that has not been ruled out. I think that sometimes the Government here confuses the anti-D cases, the infection of pregnant women with the haemophilia cases where there are other issues.

The outcome of the Lindsay Tribunal into how haemophiliacs came to be contaminated is awaited and the Irish Haemophilia Society are currently pursuing an investigation into the American plasma companies as the majority of haemophiliacs were infected through imported plasma as is the case here, not through home products. The situation here is very similar to Eire. Unfortunately in the past Eire often looked to England for advice and information on treatment, which of course proved very costly for their haemophiliacs as this country so often got it wrong! There have already been prosecutions against plasma companies in the U. S. and American lawyers are keen to use their wealth of knowledge to assist haemophiliacs and their solicitors in other European countries including ours in their pursuit of justice, negotiations are currently taking place. Haemophiliacs and their supporters aim to inform the public of the type of treatment haemophiliacs were exposed to when the Government failed to follow through with the Parliamentary commitment to self-sufficiency made by Lord Owen (former Health Minister) on the grounds of SAFETY in the mid 1970s.

Haemophiliacs in England, and Wales and to some extent Scotland were exposed to American products from the same companies used in Eire, we have records to prove this and evidence to show violation of safety procedures with regard to the collection of plasma etc. I would suggest that if you are unclear on your facts with regard to the position in Eire that you go to the Radio 4 website and listen to a recording of the "You and Yours" programme. The Irish Health Minister is quite clear that whether negligence was an issue or not the Government had a moral responsibility to take care of those infected with HIV and hepatitis C through the infected blood products. This was reflected in the setting up of the Lindsay Tribunal

to establish fact, the introduction of synthetic recombinant for ALL haemophiliacs and in the substantial compensation package awarded to affected families, a far cry from the situation here!

I appreciate that you have only recently taken up your post and may not have been briefed correctly on haemophilia issues but you do yourself no favours by stating incorrect facts. This is a re-occurring problem with the Department Of Health and I hope that you will have done your research with regard to the forthcoming meeting with the Manor House Group and Haemophilia Action UK, as we do not want to waste precious time having to correct you! We will of course be bringing information with us to remind the Government of the contents of their own documents on haemophilia treatment and policies as there appears to be have been a problem in the past with "pulped files".

The press will be following up on our forthcoming meeting with yourself and of course are always keen to interview some-one from the Department of Health in order to give a balanced view of the situation, unfortunately ministers are always too busy to give interviews on this issue. I look forward to the meeting which I understand has been changed yet again to the 15th May at 4.30 pm and welcome the chance to discuss the issue of alleged negligence.

Yours sincerely

Carol Grayson (Haemophilia Action UK)