

Haemophiliacs urge fund for Aids sufferers

By Thomson Prentice, Science Correspondent

The Government was accused yesterday of being "insensitive and uncaring" towards 1,200 haemophiliacs who have been infected with the Aids virus through the health service.

The sufferers and their families were described as the victims of a hidden tragedy at the launch of a campaign to win them state help, including a fund to protect their dependants.

The Haemophilia Society is seeking an urgent meeting with Mr John Moore, Secretary of State for Social Services, to discuss special benefits and insurance schemes for members infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Already 60 of the 1,200 have developed the disease and 45 have died. About 200 of those infected are children or teenagers, and several hundred others are under 35 years old.

All were infected through contaminated Factor VIII, a blood-clotting factor necessary to treat their inherited condition. The product, now heat-treated for safety, was imported from America because Britain could not make enough of its own.

Dr Peter Jones, director of

the Newcastle Haemophilia Centre, said yesterday: "I am seeing people who are ill and dying as a direct result of their medical treatment, and who are trapped by government inertia. This disaster is producing exactly the same sort of tragedy and misery as did the events at Zeebrugge and Hungerford, but on a much bigger scale." Mr Simon Taylor, an executive member of the Haemophilia Society, said the only response so far from the Department of Health and Social Security was that claims for compensation had to be pursued through the courts.

Haemophiliacs carrying the Aids virus could not get life insurance or mortgage protection because they were "bad risks", and those suffering from Aids needed extra money to meet the costs of caring for them at home. "I don't believe that a caring Government can stand by while widows and children are thrown out of their homes."

● Magistrates at Marlborough Street court, London, yesterday suspended a prison sentence imposed on GRO-A, aged 24, an Aids victim who admitted stealing music cassettes from a GRO-A, after being told that he had less than a year to live.

Haemophiliacs seek Aids disability pay after NHS infection

By David Fletcher, Health Services Correspondent

HAEMOPHILIAC patients who developed Aids as a result of National Health treatment for their condition, are asking for a multi-million pound Government compensation scheme, it was announced yesterday.

The Haemophilia Society has written to the Prime Minister on behalf of the 1,200 sufferers from the hereditary blood disorder who have been infected with the Aids virus.

It is asking for a disability payment of £65 to £75 a week to cover the cost of coping with Aids problems, a hardship allowance on death for an Aids victim's wife and dependants and a fund to pay insurance premiums so that Aids sufferers do not lose their homes.

The society calculates that an Aids sufferer needs £32.75 for special diets, £5 to £10 for extra heating, £8 to £15 for extra laundry costs, £1.80 for baths, approximately £10 for hospital travelling expenses and £7 for extra clothing and bedding.

Devastating effect

In its letter, it said that the Aids infection in haemophiliacs was a direct result of National Health treatment using contaminated blood products.

It went on: "This treatment was administered to keep people with haemophilia healthy, but has, in fact, exposed them to a potentially fatal illness.

"The implications are proving devastating to both the people involved and their families who have already faced extraordinary difficulties on account of haemophilia alone.

"We are looking to the Government as the only available source of support, recognition and recompense."

The society said that Aids sufferers often lost their jobs when their condition became known, faced eviction from rented accommodation, were unable to get mortgages or life insurance and were sometimes shunned by neighbours.

Mr Simon Taylor, a member of the society's council, said: "We are asking for financial help so that sufferers can die in dignity, knowing that their family is provided for.

"The claim is for a clearly defined and limited number of people suffering as a result of treatment given by a Government agency—the NHS. We do not believe that the Government will stand by and leave them to suffer."

So far the Government has taken the view that haemophiliacs should seek compensation for their injuries through the courts rather than from Whitehall.

The Rev Alan Tanner, society chairman, said: "It is unrealistic to think that the courts can provide adequate compensation. The legal process takes a long time and victims do not have the time to wait. They need help now."

5

Aids blood victims claim £30m from NHS

By Andrew Veitch,
Medical Correspondent

Ministers have agreed to meet haemophiliacs to discuss compensating 1,200 patients infected with the Aids virus after hospital treatment, the Department of Health and Social Security said yesterday.

But they are expected to reject demands for a £30 million-plus scheme to provide life insurance and mortgage protection so families are not thrown out of their homes when husbands die, guaranteed benefits for both those with Aids and their dependants, and compensation for distress that patients and families have suffered.

The Social Services Secretary, Mr John Moore, and his Health Minister, Mr Tony Newton, are understood to be concerned that state compensation would provide a precedent for other patients damaged by NHS treatment.

They are unwilling to do anything which might seem an admission that their predecessors failed to safeguard supplies of Factor 8, the blood-clotting agent, when the Aids threat was identified more than four years ago.

Health officials are watching closely a West German investigation into allegations that two senior civil servants delayed

taking action against contaminated Factor 8 from the US.

Although the threat was known in 1983, Factor 8 which had been heat-treated to kill the virus was not introduced into West Germany until 1985. As a result some 2,000 West German haemophiliacs were infected by the Aids virus.

There was a similar two-year delay in the United Kingdom. Mr Norman Fowler, then Social Services Secretary, was responsible for NHS Factor 8 at that time.

The department said yesterday that patients seeking compensation would have to sue for negligence, and families

who needed help with the extra costs of caring for Aids patients at home would have to apply to social security offices.

Ministers had agreed to meet Haemophilia Society representatives "within the next few weeks," a spokesman said. The society has been waiting since June to put its case, but holidays had "made it difficult to sort out dates."

Dr Peter Jones, a blood specialist and director of the Newcastle upon Tyne haemophilia centre, accused ministers of failing to meet their responsibility for patients suffering from an infection caused directly by NHS treatment.

"I see my patients become sick and in some cases die as a direct result of that treatment... widows left destitute, their children left without the resources which you or I would like to leave our children," he said.

He added: "Our government has a responsibility to these people and their families. That responsibility is not being met."

Mr Simon Taylor, a haemophiliac and a member of the society's executive, said: "We have to cope with prejudice, discrimination, and abuse."

"I do not believe that the Government - if it is truly a

caring government - will stand by while widows and orphans are thrown out of their homes," he added.

It was unrealistic to expect haemophiliacs to win compensation through the courts - most patients would be dead by the time the court reached a verdict, he said.

About 80 per cent of the haemophiliacs infected - ranging from babies to people over 60 - are expected to develop Aids, and most will be dead within 10 years, according to projections from haemophilia centre directors. Sixty have already developed the disease, of whom 45 have died.

14 OCT 1987

Aids kills 45 haemophiliacs

EIGHT MEMBERS of one family in the north of England, who have haemophilia, have been infected with the Aids virus.

Another family has three sons, the youngest only six years old, who are all HIV positive. All were infected after receiving contaminated batches of the blood products they need to keep them healthy.

The toll on HIV infected haemophiliacs was revealed yesterday at the launch of a national campaign to secure compensation for them from the Government. The effects on haemophiliacs and their families was described as devastating, even affecting their ability to take holidays as travel companies are asking Aids questions on sickness insurance forms.

To date 60 British haemophiliacs have developed

By Celia Hall

full Aids and 45 have died.

Another 1,200 are HIV positive and overall 60 per cent of patients with severe haemophilia in the UK are infected.

The Haemophilia Society is appealing to the government for benefits of up to £65 a week because the virus was caught as a direct result of NHS treatment.

Dr Peter Jones, director of the society's Newcastle-on-Tyne centre, said yesterday: "These people have no-one else to turn to but the Government. The effect on their lives does not just extend to life insurance and their ability to get a mortgage, but now to holiday insurance as well."

He said it would be a negation of human rights for the Government not to respond.

14 OCT 1987

Daily Mail |

Eight people in one family are hit by AIDS

By JENNY HOPE

THE devastating tragedy of the innocent victims of AIDS was highlighted yesterday with the disclosure that in one family alone eight haemophiliacs have been infected with the virus.

Two have already died. The others know they are under sentence of death.

The stricken family consist of brothers and their sons, ranging in age from teenagers to the late 50s. They live in GRO-A

They were infected after being given the essential blood-clotting agent Factor VIII by the Health Service.

This was imported from America and was made from

blood donated by AIDS sufferers.

Dr Peter Jones, director of the Newcastle Haemophilia Centre, who knows the family told of their plight yesterday at the launch of a campaign to win cash help from the government for 1,200 haemophiliacs in Britain infected by AIDS from contaminated blood.

He said: "They dare not come forward and give details of the devastating effect this has had on their lives. They fear the risk of exposure will hurt the young ones too much."

There will not be any more of them. Imported blood producers are now sterilised, and Britain will become self-sufficient in supplies next year.