



Trudy Smyth

GRO-C

Response to your email dated 19 March

1 message

Deborah Sugg
To: "Smyth, Trudy"

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20 March 2020 at 18:27

Dear Ms Smyth,

Thank you very much for your email about your documentary. My response to your questions is as follows:

I was one of the team of Ministers at the Department of Health, as Minister of State from 1982-1985. Blood products was not part of my direct ministerial responsibilities and was handled by the Under Secretary of State, Lord Glenarthur.

I did not ever attend any full policy discussions on the question of blood products for the treatment of Haemophilia, although I was aware that there was a discussion going on on the subject. These events are over 30 years ago, and I have no recollection of ever being shown or told of the opinion of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. In clinical issues of this kind, all Ministers rely heavily on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and the Medical and Scientific experts in the Department.

I think I answered a written question on the subject in the House of Commons in November 1983 because the Minister directly responsible for the policy was in the Lords. I think that the answer you quoted was to a written question and there was no comeback or debate on the subject. The answer I gave was the opinion of the medical and scientific experts in the Department at the time, which I set out as the policy position of the Government.

I was not directly involved in the implementation of any policy on the subject, but I believe that Simon Glenarthur acted responsibly and conscientiously on the basis of the advice of an outstanding Chief Medical Officer, Donald Acheson, and that there was no conclusive evidence for acting in any other way. I regret that my then colleagues are now being criticised for their actions, with the benefit of hindsight and clear information which was not available to them at the time.

I sympathise very deeply with the loss and suffering of many haemophiliacs and their families in what was one of the most tragic disasters in the history of the NHS. As with Coronavirus, some families suffer dreadful losses from newly emerging problems, until such time as medicine and science are able to come up with effective preventative measures. There is no point in searching for scapegoats with the benefit of hindsight, and I do not think that Simon Glenarthur or Donald Acheson can be blamed in any way.

I hope that this is helpful and that it will not be quoted selectively in your documentary.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Clarke

RT HON KENNETH CLARKE CH QC

NOT RELEVANT

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Dictated by Kenneth Clarke and transcribed by his PA