

Witness Name: William Wright

Statement No.: WITN2287019

Exhibits: WITN2287020 –

WITN2287086

Dated: 15th April 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN2287024



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department
Health Care Policy Division

NHS Management Executive
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Mr Bill Wright

GRO-C

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Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 25 October 1999

Dear Mr Wright

Thank you for your further letter of 29 September to Ms Susan Deacon, Minister for Health, which followed your earlier letter of 10 September about the infection of haemophiliacs in Scotland with the Hepatitis C virus. I have been asked to reply. Unfortunately the response to your earlier letter, dated 29 September, crossed with your second letter.

We did subsequently speak on the telephone following your call to Mrs Falconer on 1 October. I explained the nature of the Department's enquiries and made clear that they would be open to scrutiny and conducted in an impartial manner. I hope this allayed the concerns expressed in your second letter.

You requested a copy of the note of the Minister's meeting with the Haemophilia Society held on 14 September. I attach a copy of the letter from the Minister to the Society of 27 September 1999, which records the concerns raised by the Society at the meeting and the Minister's response.

Please be assured that the specific points you have raised in your letter will be considered in the work being undertaken by the Department on this issue.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

MICHAEL PALMER
Health Care Policy Division

29/9/99.

Susan Deacon
Minister for Health & Community Care
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG.

Dear Minister,

HEPATITIS C TRANSMISSION TO HAEMOPHILIACS.

Further to my letter of September 10th which I sent in advance of your meeting with Haemophilia Society representatives, I am deeply dismayed after over two weeks not to have received even as much as an acknowledgement from you or your department.

The Haemophilia Society have however very kindly sent me a copy of your letter to them dated September 27th which does not reassure me that you have appreciated the need for an independent enquiry into this matter.

Simply to undertake to publish the findings of a departmental enquiry does not give rise to confidence in open government when a departmental enquiry may well involve officials who have in the past been involved in either 'advising' on matters they themselves are being asked to investigate. They are potentially being asked to either criticise themselves or other public servants whom they have worked closely with.

In particular I would suggest that an independent enquiry should include consideration of the following:-

- Minutes of meetings of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service since the early 1980's and the need for their publication.
- Minutes of meetings of Directors of Scottish Haemophilia Centre Directors for the same period also for publication.
- The minutes of equivalent meetings that were taking place South of the Border during this time which consider the issue of Hepatitis C transmission from blood products.
- The steps that have been taken in other countries to address this issue, in particular if tests were conducted on British blood being exported to other countries but whether the same tests were being conducted on blood for domestic use.
- The difference in heat treatment being employed North and South of the Border in 1986 when I myself received Hepatitis C from blood products.

Given the potential controversy brewing over this affair, I urge you not to leave this matter in the hands of your department or the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service to deal with, but to take a hands on approach to ensuring that an investigation is wide ranging, open and thorough. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Bill Wright.

cc Karin Pappenheim, Haemophilia Society.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

RECEIVED

28 SEP 1999

Minister for Health & Community Care
Susan Deacon MSP

St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Karin Pappenheim
Chief Executive
The Haemophilia Society
Chesterfield House
385 Euston Road
LONDON NW1 3AU

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Date: 27 September 1999

Dear Karin,

At our meeting on 14 September I promised to write to you outlining the way forward agreed between us on the issue of Hepatitis C and the safety of blood products received by haemophiliacs in Scotland.

I hope you will agree that our meeting was a worthwhile and constructive one. I want to reiterate that I come to this issue willing to look afresh at your concerns in the light of the facts which I have asked my Department to gather. As I said at the meeting, that means that until I have had the opportunity to assess the evidence it would not be right for me to begin to speculate on the rights or wrongs of the issue and on whether or not financial compensation might be warranted.

I have made clear that I want to satisfy myself that the Executive properly addresses any matters which may require action. That is why I have asked the Department to look at the events surrounding the introduction of heat treatment for blood products in the mid-1980s, and in particular the concerns you have raised regarding the discrepancy between developments in England and Scotland.

The Department would expect to have examined the necessary evidence on this matter within a month. Having received the Department's advice I would then propose to issue their findings into the public domain. I have also made clear that the Executive would then require a period of time to arrive at a considered position on the matter, taking into account any relevant legal advice.

As part of this process the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service have invited representatives from the Society to an internal meeting during which SNBTS can explain the factual chain of events behind the development of heat-treated blood products in Scotland in the 1980s and take any questions on the subject from the Society. I understand that Michael Palmer from the Department has been in touch to discuss arrangements for this meeting.

During our meeting a number of other matters were raised concerning an alleged lack of information given to patients about the risks of contracting HCV/NANBH from blood products, and about an alleged delay in informing haemophiliacs that they were HCV-positive after they had been tested as such. Concerns were also raised about the need for authoritative data on the numbers of haemophiliacs infected with HCV and to ensure that all of those affected are receiving appropriate counselling and other support.

As I intimated at the meeting, the Department will also consider these points, although I expect a longer timeframe will be required to complete any enquiries around these issues.

We share the same objective of gathering the evidence which will enable us to come to a conclusion based upon the facts of the matter. To this end you should feel free to submit any information which you think would be relevant to the Department's investigation to Michael Palmer.

Finally, I should confirm that I would be content to hold a further meeting with the Society once our enquiries are complete and the Executive's position is clearer.



GRO-C

SUSAN DEACON



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department
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Mr Bill Wright



Telephone:
Fax:
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Your ref:
Our ref:

Date: 29 September 1999

Dear Mr Wright

Thank you for your letter of 10 September to Ms Susan Deacon, Minister for Health, about the infection of haemophiliacs in Scotland with the Hepatitis C virus through treatment with Factor VIII in the 1980s. I have been asked to reply.

The Scottish Executive has the greatest sympathy with those affected by this issue and appreciates that each case of infection is a tragedy for all concerned. Ms Deacon has made it clear that she is keen to appraise herself of the history and circumstances surrounding this issue and to judge for herself whether any further action is warranted.

She was grateful therefore for your offer of a meeting. However as you know she met with representatives from the Haemophilia Society earlier this month, when she had an opportunity to hear at first hand the concerns and experiences of people with haemophilia who have been infected. She also confirmed her wish to take a fresh look at the issues surrounding the contamination of Factor VIII in the mid-1980s.

Given her diary commitments she is unable to meet with you on a personal basis but she is grateful to you for bringing your experiences to her attention, and will bear these in mind alongside those received from the Haemophilia Society.

Yours sincerely

SANDRA FALCONER (MRS)