

Mr Muir

Dr Sutherland

BRIEF FOR NORTHERN ECHO INTERVIEW

1. Background

The Northern Echo have been running a local campaign for government compensation for haemophiliacs who have got AIDS or who are HIV antibody positive from Factor VIII blood clotting factor.

The newspaper has been briefed for their campaign by Dr Peter Jones - the Director of the Haemophilia Reference Centre in Newcastle. The detailed questions which the Echo have tabled regarding the timing of Government actions are of particular interest to Dr Jones since he feels that the DHSS failed to act on his warnings about Factor VIII safety in February 1986.

2. Compensation for Haemophiliacs

There has never been a general State scheme to compensate those who suffer the unavoidable adverse effects which may arise from some medical procedures. Compensation can only be awarded by the courts when negligence has been proved. However all the facilities of the NHS and a range of Social Security benefits are available to those who suffer illness, unemployment or loss of earnings as a result of infection with HIV or as a result of contracting AIDS itself.

Officials are actively considering an "Information Pack" for these haemophiliacs to help them both to get to know which benefits they would be eligible to claim, and how to go about doing so. We will do all we can to help them. (FLAG A gives details)

3. Withdrawal of Armour Factor VIII

The essential dates are summarised at Flag B. ^{the end of} Since December 1985, all licensed imported Factor VIII has been heat treated and made from screened plasma.

In February 1986, the CSM reviewed two cases which Dr Jones had suggested showed that Armour Factor VIII (which was heat treated but made from unscreened donations) had transmitted HIV. Both CSM and the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS decided the evidence was insufficient for action to be taken at that time. They agreed to maintain a close scrutiny.

By June 1986 the unscreened Armour Factor VIII was clearly implicated in HIV transmission. It was formally withdrawn but since it had not been allowed to be imported since 1985 residual stocks were small.

In October 1986 as a safety measure, Factor VIII made by Armour from screened plasma was also withdrawn by the Company after discussions with the CSM. This was because the heat treatment used by the Company was considered less rigorous than other manufactures.

4. Recent Media Interest in the Three Birmingham Children

The media has last week taken up the case of three Birmingham children who have seroconverted. They were given Armour Factor VIII which was heat treated but unscreened in February 1986.

This Armour Factor VIII was not generally considered unsafe at that time (see above).

5. Safety of Present Factor VIII

There is no evidence in this country that the Factor VIII products currently available have transmitted HIV. They are all made from screened donations and heat treated. [The Factor VIII used by the three Birmingham children was from unscreened donations which has not been imported since 1985.]

6. History of AIDS and Haemophiliacs

We became aware in 1982 that haemophiliacs in the USA were contracting AIDS. Although the mechanism of infection was not known, it was presumed that it had been transmitted through use of blood products, such as Factor VIII. By mid 1984 the virus had been clearly characterised and shown to be the causative agent for AIDS.

Heat treatment techniques were developed to inactivate the AIDS virus in the USA. Heat treated Factor VIII from the USA was available to clinicians to prescribe on a named patient basis to patients in the UK from the end of 1984.

At the end of 1984 heat treatment had not been proven to inactivate HIV but Haemophilia Centre doctors were given guidance by their Chairman on the use and availability of heat treated Factor VIII. This enabled them to make informed clinical judgements at that time.

7. Notes for general questions
at Flag C.

GRO-C: R J Moore

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