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Blood donor passes Aids virus to baby

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A baby whose mother was given blood transfusions during pregnancy has been infected with the Aids virus, it was disclosed last night. A 78-year-old man who received blood from the same donor has also been infected.

Neither the baby nor the man, both from the GRO-A area, has developed the full-blown disease, said the Department of Health. It is the first time that the virus has been transmitted in blood donated in the United Kingdom.

Doctors are checking every one who has received blood from a donor in the area who has been found to have antibodies to the virus, showing that he had been infected.

The 78-year-old man had been given several transfusions and surgery on him was cancelled when he was found to have antibodies to the virus, called HTLV III, it is understood.

The names of the patients and the donor are being withheld. The virus has spread through contaminated blood transfusions to patients in the United States and Australia—12 American children are suffering from transfusion-associated Aids.

Doctors and scientists are working flat out to perfect the blood test for antibodies to the virus, and the aim is to test every blood donation. It was stressed last night that having antibodies does not mean that a patient will necessarily develop the disease.