

Department of Health
and Social Security

**PRESS
RELEASE**

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85/227

7 November 1983

NHS TO CHARGE PRIVATE HOSPITALS HANDLING CHARGES FOR BLOOD

The National Health Service is to bring in handling charges for supplying private hospitals with blood - but the blood itself is to remain free. The charges will cover the cost of collecting, processing, handling and transporting blood given by blood donors.

Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Social Services, announced his decision to allow the NHS to make charges for the supply of blood to patients in private hospitals and to private patients in NHS hospitals today (Monday).

Mr Fowler said: "The NHS from the regional transfusion centres alone now supplies well over 30,000 units of blood a year to the private sector. The demand has increased substantially over recent years and has meant an increase in the workload of the NHS. The charges will be designed to cover the collection testing and distribution costs, but will not include any charge for the blood itself which is given free.

"I shall be asking Regional Health Authorities to ensure that the income raised is used to help make the NHS self-sufficient in blood products. At present we pay for substantial imports particularly from the United States."

A copy of Mr Fowler's parliamentary written answer announcing the charges is attached.

BLOOD

206 Mr David Knox (C. Staffordshire, Moorlands):

To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, whether he will introduce handling charges for blood supplied to non-National Health Service hospitals.

MR NORMAN FOWLER

It has always been the policy of the National Blood Transfusion Service to meet private hospitals' reasonable requests for blood and certain blood derivatives according to availability and clinical need. After consultation with representatives of the National Health Service, the private sector and the medical profession, I have decided that, in keeping with the Government's policy that economic charges should be made for NHS services offered on an agency basis, private hospitals will be required to meet in full the costs incurred by the Blood Transfusion Service in supplying blood and blood derivatives. This policy will also apply to private patients receiving treatment in NHS hospitals. The charges will be designed to cover the cost of collecting, processing, handling and transporting such materials. I would stress that the charges will not include any element for the blood itself, which is of course freely donated to the National Blood Transfusion Service for use where it is needed. Private hospitals will be free to pass on these handling charges to their patients. It will, however, remain a strict condition of supply that no profit is to be made from blood or derivatives supplied by the National Blood Transfusion Service.

The Government are committed to a policy of ensuring that this country becomes self-sufficient in blood products. We are investing £21 million in the redevelopment of the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree; but self-sufficiency can only be achieved if there is an adequate supply of blood plasma. It is for this reason that I shall be asking Regional Health Authorities to ensure that the income from handling charges is used for this purpose.

I shall be discussing the details of these new arrangements, including the operative date, with representatives of the NHS and the private sector and will issue guidance as soon as possible.