

JANUARY 17TH, 1995

Blood test delay 'put lives at risk'

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE blood transfusion service was accused last night of jeopardising people's health by delaying the introduction of a test for hepatitis C virus for two years.

Between 1989 and 1991, thousands of patients received blood contaminated with the virus, according to the BBC1 programme *Panorama*. The Government plans to trace those who had been infected with contaminated blood to provide counselling and, if necessary, treatment.

The service could face legal claims from people infected during the two-year period when the test was available but was not used. Over the period, it is estimated, about 3,600 bags of infected blood were given to patients.

Hepatitis C virus can cause liver inflammation which is usually mild but may in about a fifth of the cases lead to cirrhosis of the liver in 20 years. Of these, about a tenth go on to develop liver cancer, which is nearly always fatal. The first test was developed in the United States.

had not wanted to start screening blood donations then because the test produced too many false positive results.

"You have to remember that we are talking about doing a thousand tests a day at this one centre," he said. "So any problems with the test — too many complications, too much blood wastage — could perversely get you into a situation where you are doing more harm than good."

Dr Geoffrey Dusheiko, a liver specialist at the Royal Free Hospital in London, told *Panorama*: "We were adamant that hepatitis C screening should be introduced and I thought that moment had arrived once a test was authorised in several countries."

The Haemophilia Society believes that more than 3,000 people with haemophilia have been infected with the virus, many before any test was available. In Belgium, *Panorama* said, the problem with false positives was dealt with by a second test.

A helpline, on 0800-767800, is open 10am-6pm today and tomorrow.

8. Details of the partner you would like:
Min. age: _____ Max. age: _____
Height: min. _____ max. _____
Don't mind ☐
Children? Yes, at home ☐
Yes, living elsewhere ☐ None ☐
Marital status: Single ☐ Divorced ☐
Widowed ☐

6. How would people describe you?
☐ Adventurous ☐ Romantic ☐ Shy ☐ Considerate ☐ Serious ☐ Warmhearted ☐ Fashionable ☐ Practical ☐ Conventional ☐ Reliable ☐ Always ready for a joke ☐
7. Personal Information
Religion: _____
Marital Status: Single ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated ☐

the amount of diluent supplied. Smith Kline Beecham supplied 20 per cent more diluent than expected, enabling nurses who gave the vaccinations to get more than seven doses from each ten-dose vial.

"We have correspondence from their medical director, Dr Faulds, showing this to be the case," the Health Department spokesman said. A decision over what to do with the surplus will be taken at the end of next month when health authorities complete mopping up of children who missed the main campaign, the Health Department said.

A further two million doses were supplied by Merieux, another vaccine manufacturer, but there were no errors involved in that order.

Dr Aidan Macfarlane, director of child health services for Oxfordshire Health Authority, said time spent giving the vaccinations during last November's campaign had cost the authority "a hell of a lot of money".

He said: "The Health Department supplied the vaccine for nothing but we had to find our own staff to give it. We used school nurses, doctors and any medical staff we could lay our hands on."

"We got rather more than seven doses out of each ten-dose vial. I used to get at least eight and some got nine. We wanted to vaccinate sixth formers but although we have the vaccine we don't have the staff."

The Rev Michael Watts of the Society of the Maintenance of the Faith, le

Parish patrons unite

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

CHURCH leaders met in London yesterday to launch a group which they hope will prevent traditional Anglicanism from splitting into factions and will provide a forum for debate on contentious issues such as women priests.

The Private Patrons Consultative Group represents five Church of England societies, including the Church Union, which are responsible for maintaining traditional, evangelical or catholic worship. The

group will advise private patrons who have the right to nominate clergy to vacancies in 1,400 parishes.

It will deal with a wide range of issues, including women in the priesthood and diocesan powers over parish appointments. Paul Kent, convener of the group and President of the Society for Maintenance of Faith, said: "The Church of England has committed itself to a dual identity — a freewheeling liberal aspect on the one hand, and on the other a traditional orthodox view which declares itself to have

Dimbleby puts down organic

THE broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby and his wife, Bel Mooney, are to become part-time organic farmers after buying a 60-acre property in GRO-C near GRO-C (Rachel Kelly writes).

Yesterday the Dimblebys put their home in GRO-C about a mile away, on the market for £495,000. They denied that the move was because of their unsuccessful campaign last year against a bypass on the edge of GRO-C. Ms Mooney, a writer, and her daughter

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GRO-C
Ms Mooney said: "Jonathan has always wanted to farm. This will enable us to fulfil his dream of a small organic farm with Hereford cows and Welsh sheep."

Mr Dimbleby, a graduate of the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester and President of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, will spend half his week farming and half working on London Weekend Television's Sunday political

programme, presented by Brian W. He has farmed holding for the past but this will be the first he has owned a 1 surrounding land to say how much with its four-bed century house, has "I first saw the about six or seven he said. "I asked let me know if he to sell." The henceforth be "in to organic farming

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