

cups for drinking water and players should avoid dipping their hands or cups into team water supplies. One factor the Atlanta experts could not solve was whether the players' physical exertion enhanced disease severity.

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# Haemophilia alert over AIDS factor

Mr J.A. Parker  
MH 1209

GOVERNMENT safety experts are keeping a close watch on the quality of imported blood products to protect British haemophiliacs from AIDS.

The Committee on the Safety of Medicines has taken action following reports of 12 cases of AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, among haemophiliacs in the US.

## Contaminated

The cases are thought to have been caused by contaminated Factor VIII, the blood concentrate used by haemophiliacs for self-medication.

The UK imports 50 per cent of its Factor VIII from the US, and is likely to continue to do so at least for the next three years, according to Dr Trevor Barrowcliff of the National Institute for Health Standards and Control, in north London.

He said the institute had been aware of the problem of AIDS

by STEPHEN CANTLE

for some time and had alerted haemophilia centres in the UK.

'But too little is known about the cause of this disease. Nobody knows what to look for,' he said.

The Oxford haemophilia centre has responded to the alert by drawing up a special surveillance register, aimed at spotting early signs of AIDS in all the haemophiliacs in the UK.

Dr Charles Rizza, consultant in charge of the Oxford centre, said that there had also been attempts to clean up Factor VIII, using ultra-violet light.

'Initially this was done to reduce contamination with hepatitis viruses, but it should also reduce the AIDS risk.'

'This new, cleaner material should be available in the next nine months, but until then, I'm afraid, our haemophiliacs are in the lap of the gods,' Dr Rizza said.

So far AIDS has not been reported in any of the 4,000

British haemophiliacs, according to Dr Nicol Galbraith, director of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in Colindale.

However, one haemophiliac in Cardiff is suspected of having contracted the disease.

## Difficulty

Dr Galbraith has recently written to the *British Medical Journal* asking doctors to report all cases of AIDS and Kaposi's sarcoma in an attempt to determine the size of the problem in the UK (i).

He said it was still too early to say how big the disease was in Britain, but he was experiencing difficulty in obtaining information about cases.

He would like doctors to contact him or Dr Marion McEvoy at the CDSC, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5EQ, so that all cases of AIDS can be monitored.

(i) *British Medical Journal*, 1983, 286, 1354.

## Midazolam sedates with no injection pain

A WATER-SOLUBLE benzodiazepine, midazolam, may replace conventional intravenous diazepam.

The drug has been successfully used to sedate patients undergoing gastroscopy, and tests on volunteers have shown it to be a much shorter acting tranquilliser with less evidence of entero-hepatic recirculation.

A study from the department of anaesthetics at Queen's University, Belfast, showed that patients suffered considerable pain when injected with Valium,

thiopentone and methohexitone but hardly noticed injections with midazolam.

Professor John Dundee said that the drug was a good alternative to diazepam for patients undergoing gastroscopy.

Midazolam was particularly effective on elderly patients who reported a higher level of anterograde amnesia. It acts faster than Valium and oral temazepam, allowing endoscopy to take place quickly.

*British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 1982, 54, 935.

## Admission (1397)

For ten days, until three days before admission, she had been applying steroid creams to her vagina and vulva, on her own initiative.

These were Ultralan, containing 0.5 per cent hydrocortisone, and Duodexa, containing 0.1 per cent dexamethasone. She had used about 25mg hydrocortisone and 7mg dexamethasone.

According to Dr Alasdair Dutton of the hospital's Department of Medicine, the steroid creams may well have caused the local overgrowth of pathogenic staphylococci.

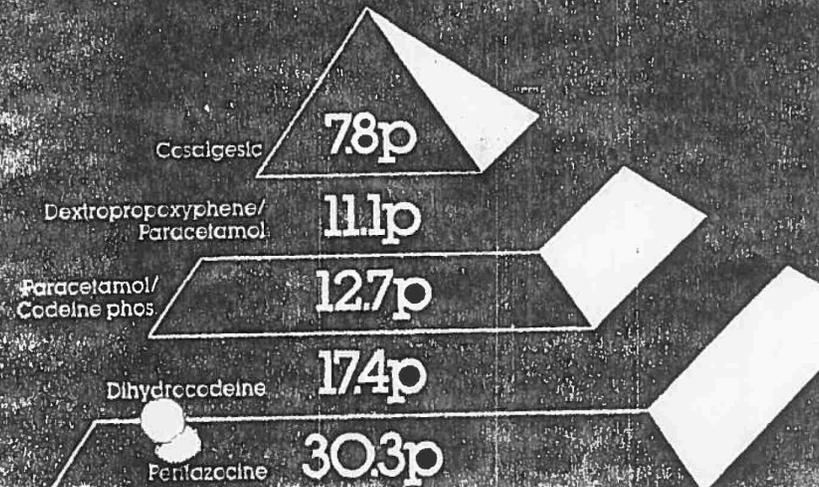
He said: 'The steroids may well have influenced this patient's vaginal flora.'

'We have reported her case to highlight the possible danger of the abuse of readily available steroid preparations.'

*Lancet*, 1983, i, 938.

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## Two hearts beat

