

800 haemophilia sufferers 'will develop Aids' 2

From Andrew Veitch in Washington

More than 800 of the British haemophiliacs infected by the Aids virus are expected to develop the full-blown fatal disease.

Doctors gave the latest predictions to the international Aids conference in Washington yesterday and urged the United Kingdom Government to relent and compensate patients who will die from being given contaminated Factor 8, the blood-clotting agent, imported from the United States.

The suggestion from Baroness Trumpington, health minister in the House of Lords, that haemophiliacs should sue the drug companies instead of claiming state compensation was condemned as "the height of cynicism."

"It would take three or four years for the cases to come to court, and by that time most of them will be dead," said Dr Peter Jones, head of Newcastle upon Tyne Haemophilia Centre.

His team has tracked 188 haemophiliacs in the north. By this year, 87 had been infected by the virus — 83 per cent of whom have now developed Aids or the first signs of the disease.

Nationally, an estimated 1,200 haemophiliacs have been infected. If his results are reflected elsewhere — and Dr

Jones is grimly confident they will be — then more than 800 will develop Aids over the next few years.

Some are children under five, others are middle-aged men, many have wives and children. Some of their wives — three out of 61, or about 5 per cent in his sample — have also been infected.

"The men don't want compensation for themselves, they want it for the widows and children they will leave behind," said Dr Jones.

"Because they are HIV antibody positive, the men can't get insurance, they can't get mortgages. Their wives will be left without houses. Even the telephone the NHS provides because they are disabled will be taken away when they die."

Mr Tony Newton, the health minister, has rejected the Haemophilia Society's claim for a no-fault compensation scheme similar to that introduced for children damaged by whooping cough vaccinations.

He told the Commons social services committee last month that whereas it was right to compensate healthy people given a treatment designed to keep them healthy, it would be wrong to compensate ill people for damage caused by treatment intended to make them well. The committee accepted his argument.

Diary of an Aids victim, Page 13

Washington conference

World-wide Aids warning³

By Thomson Prentice, Science Correspondent

The world faces a huge increase in Aids with up to three million new cases in the next four years, an international conference in Washington was told yesterday.

Dr Jonathan Mann, director of the World Health Organization special programme on Aids, said that between five and 10 million people are believed infected, creating a world-wide emergency that required "urgent and unprecedented" global action.

"Aids cannot be stopped in any one country until it is stopped in all countries," he said.

Every continent was affected and further spread of the disease was inevitable, he said. Cases had been reported by 113 countries. "Fear and ignorance about Aids is caus-

ing as many tragedies as the disease itself", he added.

A world summit of health ministers to discuss the crisis is to be held in London next January, he said.

Almost 21,000 people in the United States have died from the disease but by 1991 the death toll is expected to reach 179,000. Dr James Curran told the meeting yesterday.

Dr Curran, of the Centre for Infectious Diseases in Atlanta, said the biggest increases in Aids cases in America last year were among heterosexual men and women.

Among 6,000 such cases in men and 2,000 in women the majority — 68 and 51 per cent — were directly associated with intravenous drug abuse.

● A campaign for government

compensation for haemophiliacs and their families who are affected by Aids is being launched after evidence of the risks to them of the disease emerged yesterday.

A study showed that 83 per cent of a group of haemophiliacs in England who were infected with the Aids virus through contaminated blood products have developed symptoms of the disease and seven of them have died.

The campaign will be led by the Haemophilia Society. Dr Jones and his colleagues believe the Government has a responsibility because haemophiliacs became infected with the Aids virus through contaminated prescribed blood-clotting products several years ago.

19