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Extract from

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Donors help fight AIDS

Frightening reports of American blood products containing 'the gays' disease' AIDS being exported to Europe were today put into perspective by Mr John Watt.

Firstly, Scots were about top of the world league for freely donating blood and Scotland was virtually self-sufficient in blood products such as Factor Eight.

SCREENING

Only a small percentage of blood products therefore came from the USA. The problem with AIDS — acquired immune deficiency syndrome — was that there was no known way of screening for it in blood.

But this was also true of some types of hepatitis, and there was always a small risk of infection from blood products.

In the case of AIDS, he said: "The facts of the scare are real but the risk is a small one."

Perhaps the people most at risk from blood infections were the staff at his centre. But in 2000 man-years there, they

had not had one blood-transmitted infection.

Although the AIDS story had caused concern, the case for a link between the infection and blood products was no more than "strongly circumstantial," he said.

The major cause of death among haemophiliacs was still haemophilia.

GRO-A