

NEWS

'My life is not mine any more, it belongs to the HIV virus — I hope you will try to do something to help me'

This little baby was killed by the NHS

Callum Macrae

FOR little [GRO-A] is already too late. The National Health Service gave his mother [GRO-A] blood contaminated with the Aids virus and he was born with it in his veins.

'We didn't know anything about Aids or HIV until [GRO-A] was ill,' said his father, [GRO-A] Wray. 'It was just before she died, in October 1986, that we found out she had Aids.'

'After my wife's test, they wanted to test me. We were positive.' Little [GRO-A] died, aged three, in 1988. His father has Aids Related Complex, and it is only a matter of time before he develops full-blown Aids.

Yesterday, Mr [GRO-A] gave his support to *The Observer's* campaign to win compensation for the forgotten NHS victims of Aids: 'People shouldn't have to go cap in hand trying to prove they are entitled to compensation. Everybody knows they are entitled to it.'

The campaign was launched after the Government agreed to pay out £42 million to about 1,200 haemophiliac victims of Aids who were given HIV-infected blood by the NHS. The Department of Health specifically excluded non-haemophiliacs.

But [GRO-A] a 26-year-old Edinburgh chef, refused to accept the ruling. As a leukemia victim, he had been given repeated blood transfusions and

then a bone marrow transplant. He thought he had been cured, until surgeons told him he had been given contaminated blood. 'I had the virus. It devastated me.' With his solicitor, Brian Donald, he began to gather evidence of other non-haemophiliacs who were infected with the Aids virus from blood transfusions in NHS hospitals. Several dozen have now come to light. The true figure may be as high as 400.

Ms Marianne Rigge, director of the College of Health, argues: 'It is a tragedy. These people deserve every bit as much help as the haemophiliacs.'

'Anyone who goes into hospital for treatment which might be life-saving but finds it has the opposite effect and results in them facing death should be given every possible form of support.'

When the tragedy of the forgotten victims of Aids was highlighted in *The Observer*, the issue was taken up in Parliament by MPs across the political spectrum. Nearly 100 have now signed an Early Day Motion calling on Health Secretary William Waldegrave to reverse his department's 'calous and illogical' refusal to compensate the non-haemophiliac NHS victims.

Canada, they pointed out, has already compensated equally all patients treated with HIV-positive blood. Claimants only have to prove the balance of probability that they were infected in this way.

Lord Kilmarnock, chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on Aids, said: 'I am inclined to agree that this is rather more of a moral issue, particularly since the haemo-

philiacs have been compensated.'

Social Democrat MP Rosie Barnes agrees: 'I really don't see why this group should be discriminated against. It's ridiculous to say the two cases are not the same. They're identical.'

Some forgotten Aids victims, desperate to change the government's mind, have appealed directly to Prime Minister John Major. '[GRO-A] a 45-year-old mother who was given her fatal blood transfusion during a gynaecological operation in 1984. She wrote to Mr Major: 'My life is not mine any more, it belongs to the HIV virus. My children do not know what is wrong with me — they think it's cancer.'

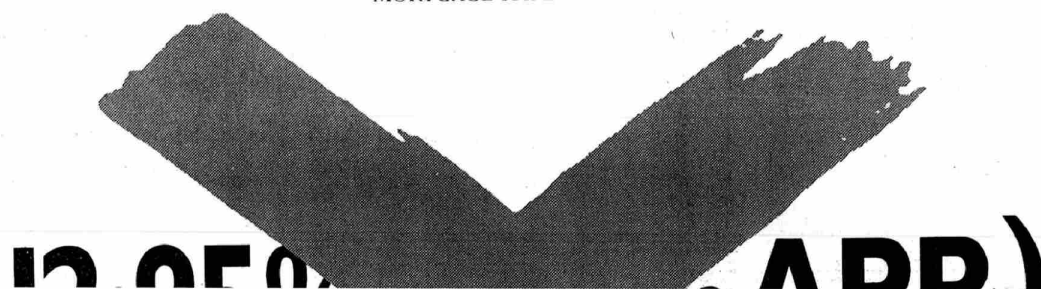
'I hope you will read my letter and try to do something to help me, and people like me who have become HIV-infected via a blood transfusion. We are only a few but we are there. I call us the forgotten.' Mr Major's office replied with an official acknowledgement. Last week, the Department of Health, finally replied to solicitors fighting for a settlement of the tragedy.

Mrs Virginia Bottomley wrote: 'The Government does not accept that they (the non-haemophiliacs) have a stronger claim than other patients who may have been injured as a result of medical accidents or as an unintended side-effect of medical treatment.'

GRO-A

Happier days: [GRO-A] and [GRO-A] at their wedding.

MORTGAGE RATE DECREASE



GRO-A

Ministers refuse to help Aids victims

THERE could be as many as 400 people infected with the Aids virus during NHS surgery. Almost 80 are already known by name to the Department of Health.

The Government refuses to help any of them, despite the fact that they all entered hospital trusting in the health service to cure, rather than condemn them. These are just some of the forgotten victims:

■ Married woman in her thirties infected as a result of blood transfusion given during an abdominal operation. Died 1988.

■ Woman in her early thirties infected by a blood transfusion given to her during labour. She and her baby were both infected.

■ Mother in her twenties infected by a blood transfusion after giving birth. Fortunately her child was not infected.

■ Woman in her mid-twenties infected by blood transfusion given after a road accident.

■ [GRO-A] now 22, infected during treatment for aplastic anaemia.

■ [GRO-A] now 12, infected during successful operation to cure a hole in the heart.

■ Man in late forties infected by emergency blood transfusion after car accident.

■ [GRO-A] 26-year-old Edinburgh chef, infected during leukaemia treatment.

■ [GRO-A] 45-year-old mother of three, infected during a gynaecological operation.

■ Elderly woman infected during gall-bladder operation.

■ Woman in the southern England who required more than 50 pints of blood after pregnancy complications.

■ Five-year-old boy transfused at birth because he was premature.

■ 19-year-old girl infected during a spinal operation. She now has full-blown Aids.

■ Middle-aged mother infected during a gynaecological operation who has now had several bouts of the pneumonia common in Aids patients.

Infected victim: Baby [GRO-A] whose mother contracted Aids from an NHS blood injection and died in 1986, two years before [GRO-A] himself died. To compound a family tragedy, [GRO-A] father, [GRO-A] has Aids Related Complex and in time he, too, will have full-blown Aids.

Just what do I tell my daughter,