

23 May 1983

Mr David G Watters,
Co-ordinator,
The Haemophilia Society,
P.O.Box 9,
16 Trinity Street,
London SE1 1DE

Dear Mr Watters,

I make two points in reply to your letter of 9th May, and I am sure you will understand our worry about the health and safety of members working with blood and blood products.

Firstly, I am so sympathetic and I have spoken with haemophiliacs in ASTMS. There is the risk of Hepatitis: a vaccine is available for staff, but there are doubts about this, and we have been unable to obtain any satisfactory information as to how safe it really is. The DHSS is completely unhelpful and on 9th December 1982, Mr E L Harris, Deputy Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Security, replied to us refusing to answer a number of questions about this.

We have not written to the Secretary of State, Mr Norman Fowler and hope he will be more forthcoming, especially in view of the current concern about AIDS being transmitted via blood or blood products, i.e. there is the possibility, however remote, of AIDS infecting the vaccine intended to protect members from hepatitis. You will understand our insistence that this issue is satisfactorily clarified.

Secondly, we appreciate your concern about the effect of a ban on imported blood products, and we are anxious that the UK move to self-sufficiency is a matter of great urgency: this is probably the best solution to the problems of health risks and the "balance" you mention.

However, after campaigning very successfully for a substantial increase in UK production, we were horrified to learn only a few days ago that budgets at the Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree, were being cut by 10% on official instructions. You would expect us to be alarmed by this and we are. But, if our members could be completely assured that the Hepatitis vaccine now available, is in every respect safe, and if all concerned were confident there would be genuine and rapid progress towards self-sufficiency, obviously, our worry would disappear, and we intend to continue our campaign to achieve this.

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11/01/83 11:22 AM

Mr David Watters

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Perhaps we could both look at the matter again when the outcome of the General Election is known, because I know that a Labour Government wants self-sufficiency in blood products, and is entirely supportive of this approach.

Yours sincerely,

Ref: CJ/GK/AT