



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Promotion Policy Branch

Dundonald House Stormont Belfast BT4 3SF

Telephone 01232 524214

Fax 01232 524863

Ms Ann McIwrath

GRO-C

Your reference

Our reference GRO-C

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Dear

Thank you for your recent letter to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which has been passed to me for reply.

I am sorry to hear that both you and your 13 year old son are haemophiliacs and carry the hepatitis C virus. I sympathise with you both and also with all other patients who may have become infected with hepatitis C through blood transfusions or blood products.

Like you, most haemophilia patients were infected with hepatitis C before blood products were treated to destroy viruses. All patients received the best treatment available in the light of medical knowledge at the time.

You will be interested to know that Health Departments throughout the United Kingdom are considering a range of potential initiatives to improve the understanding, treatment and management of hepatitis C. This could include encouragement of research into the condition and guidance to the Health Service on best practice where there is a clinical consensus.

The Government does not accept, however, that there has been negligence and has no plans to make payments to such patients. It is the Government's view that the most effective use of resources is to seek to improve the understanding, management and treatment of the condition. In this way the impact of the disease on individual patients and their families can be minimised.

The Department of Health (London) is supporting an initiative by the Haemophilia Society to undertake a study into the best way to support those who are infected with the virus.

I hope that this will help to reassure you that the Government will do all it can to care for those affected.

Yours sincerely

JOHN BREEN