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Twin bid to curb killer AIDS peril

Infected donors face jail

● DONOR homosexuals in Australia, whose infected blood causes the death of a patient after transfusion, could be jailed for manslaughter, an MP said yesterday. This follows a new law in Queensland, where two babies died last week after receiving AIDS-tainted blood.

● Already anyone in Queensland who donates blood without stating they are AIDS victims faces a two-year sentence. No Australian donor who admits to being homosexual can give blood. All accepted donors must sign a declaration stating they are not homosexuals.

● In Sydney, where one in 10 men are said to be bisexual and where the majority of Australia's homosexuals live, there have been violent attacks on the gay community.

Blood safety check

By CLARE DOVER, Medical Reporter

A TWO-PRONGED attack has been launched by British scientists in a bid to beat the deadly AIDS virus which can be carried in blood donated by male homosexuals and hard drug users.

All blood plasma used to make the life-saving Factor Eight for haemophilia sufferers, is to be heat-treated by next April to kill the virus.

And a new test is to be introduced to check blood donated to the Blood Transfusion Service. Together, they will protect against the killer virus being passed on through blood transfusions or blood products.

Britain now has between 80 and 90 AIDS victims, all with little chance of survival.

The move to bring in heat treatment was announced yesterday by the Central Blood Laboratories' Authority, following the death of haemophilia sufferer Terence McStay, 33, who had been treated with Factor 8, at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle. Haemophiliacs risk bleeding to death from cuts and bruises unless they are given Factor Eight, the blood clotting agent, which is extracted from the plasma of donated blood.

Mr McStay is the second haemophilia sufferer in Britain to die of AIDS. Last year, a 55-year-old man died in Bristol after receiving Factor Eight concentrate of American origin. About half the blood clotting agent used in Britain is imported from America.

Tests

Expansion of Britain's blood products laboratory at Elstree, Hertfordshire, will mean that by late 1986 American imports will be unnecessary.

Currently, Britain imports blood products, but all the whole blood given in transfusions comes from donors in this country.

A warning has been sent out urging homosexuals and hard drug users in Britain not to donate blood.

The test for AIDS, which will eventually be done on all donated blood, was developed by scientists at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School and the Chester Beatty Laboratories in London.

Announcing measures to combat the spread of the "Gay Plague," junior Health Minister Mr John Patten said yesterday: "It is hoped to increase the availability of tests within the next few months."

These measures



PATTEN: High hopes

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TELEGRAPH

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LONDON and MANCHESTER

Plasma tests in Aids war

By GRAHAM JONES

REPRESENTATIVES of Britain's 5,000 haemophiliacs called yesterday for improved safeguards for blood infusions after it was revealed two men had died after receiving plasma contaminated with the killer disease Aids.

Within hours the Central Blood Laboratories' Authority in Elstree, Herts, said that from next April they would be "heat treating" all plasma used to make the special clotting agent used by haemophiliacs, Factor VIII.

Urgent consideration to using heat-treated blood products was one of three demands by Haemophilia Society coordinator Mr David Watters.

It is not yet known if the Government will insist that imported American Factor VIII, implicated in the deaths of both Mr Terence McStay, 33, of Wishaw, and Mr GRO-A, 58, of Bristol, should also be treated.

The heat process, similar to the pasteurisation of milk, involves raising plasma to a temperature of around 60 C for half an hour, and doubles the cost of treatment because it halves Factor VIII's clotting power.

Tests in months

"As far as we know from experiments, the Aids virus is very sensitive to heat," said Dr John Pattison, professor of medical microbiology at University College in London, and head of a team at Middlesex Hospital who have developed a possible test for Aids in blood.

The urgent establishment of the Middlesex team's tests for the virus HTLV-3, which is linked to Aids, was another of the demands by the Haemophilia Society.

Prof Pattison said that if a pilot study was successful, the tests could be in wide use in a matter of months.

Strong criticism of Britain's blood transfusion centres "many of which fall short of the standards which we regard as acceptable," came from Mr Watters.

He said strict controls should be introduced so that those in high risk groups—homosexuals, self-injecting drug addicts, and those already suffering from

AIDS FIGHT

By GRAHAM JONES

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aids — should not be allowed to give blood.

Mr John Patten, Parliamentary secretary for Health, yesterday unveiled a four-point plan to combat the further spread of Aids (Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome).

First, new leaflets and controls are being introduced at Blood Centres to eliminate high risk donors.

"No homosexual or anyone else in a risk group should give blood at the moment — that is absolutely critical," he said.

Second, the Health Education Council is to mount a campaign on how Aids could be controlled.

Third, pilot studies are being carried out to discover whether the tests for HTLV-3 could be widely used for screening.

Fourth, the Medical Research Council is engaged in five projects "to look at the whole issue of Aids."

Mr Patten added that Britain would be self-sufficient in blood by late 1986 so from that date there would be no need to use Factor VIII imported from America, where blood is bought rather than donated.

Symptoms of Aids are swollen glands; pink or purple blotches on or under the skin — painless, but gradually getting bigger; weight loss of around 10 lbs in less than two months; fever persisting for more than a week; a persistent cough; and persistent diarrhoea.

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