

16/18
GRO-CGRO-C
17.7-20
22/7P. 2
GRO-C
No file on
NQH/20/1

"Suspect Factor 8 recalled in Aids alert

By Andrew Veitch
Medical Correspondent

The drug firm Armour has withdrawn batches of American-made Factor 8 for haemophiliacs because of fears that it could be carrying the Aids virus, it was disclosed yesterday.

At least four patients — two British, one in the Netherlands and another in the United States—are reported to have been infected after using the Armour product called Factorate.

The Department of Health was consulted about the withdrawal, which came last week, but it made no public announcement.

The department said last night that since the beginning of the year all US Factor 8 given to British patients had come from screened donors.

The withdrawn batches were heat-treated to kill the Aids virus, but the blood plasma from which they were made came from donors who had not been screened. Batches of Factorate still on the market come from donors who have been tested for antibodies to the virus.

Armour's medical officer, Dr Peter Harris, said yesterday that the withdrawal was prompted by the Dutch case after one of the donors whose blood plasma was used was found to have been infected.

The two British cases had not been confirmed he added.

Haemophilia centres were being asked to return all Factorate issued before January this year, Dr Harris said.

The Haemophilia Society's co-ordinator, Mr David Walters, said yesterday: "Armour have taken a reasonable, precautionary and voluntary step."

Urging patients to keep taking factor 8, he added that the chance of infection was now very small. "The dangers of bleeding episodes outweigh any other risks."

More than half Britain's 2,000 haemophiliacs have been infected by the virus from contaminated Factor 8 — most of it imported from the US. By the end of May 17 had developed full-blown Aids and 16 of them had died.

The Department of Health was warned five months ago that haemophiliacs might be in danger from Armour's Factor 8.

The warning came from Dr Peter Jones, director of the haemophilia centre at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He said last night that the product should have been withdrawn earlier.