

GEBIS
ALQ9

Your Ref: SG/HB

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From the

Minister for Health

19 FEB 1991

Dear Sam,

Thank you for your letter of 7 January to William Waldegrave concerning compensation for leukaemia patients who have contracted the AIDS virus (HIV) as a result of blood platelet transfusion.

I have the greatest sympathy for those who have become HIV positive through blood transfusions. As you know, a settlement offer for HIV infected haemophiliacs and their families was announced in the House on 11 December. Opinion in the House and in all parts of the country has recognised that the tragic combination of circumstances of those with haemophilia and HIV are exceptional, and justify the special provision which has been made.

The Government has carefully considered the arguments for extending payments to people other than haemophiliacs who have been infected with HIV as a result of NHS treatment. Our view remains that people who were infected with HIV as a result of blood or blood component transfusion are no different in principle from other groups of patients harmed as an unfortunate side effect of NHS treatment.

Any special provision for those transfused could itself create inequity and attract criticism. Difficult questions would arise whether to distinguish between those transfused in the UK and those transfused abroad; between those abroad for a UK company and those on holiday. The validation of claims would also not be as straight forward as for haemophiliacs whose medical history is well known. Some of those transfused might not be able to establish their entitlement and this would make them feel aggrieved.

C A R I N G F O R T H E 1 9 9 0 s



More widely, it would be difficult to maintain a distinction between blood component transfusion cases and the recipients of skin grafts or organ transplants who have been infected with HIV or people with other transfusion transmitted diseases or people who have suffered catastrophic side affects of other medical treatment.

I am sorry if this is a disappointing reply, but I hope it explains why we have no plans to extend the special financial help for haemophiliacs to those infected through blood transfusions.

Yours ever

GRO-C

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY