

Tests on haemophiliacs positive NHS blood carries killer AIDS virus

BRITAIN'S Health Service blood supply has become contaminated with the virus thought to cause the killer disease AIDS.

New evidence confirms the worst fears that the battle to prevent it infiltrating blood used for transfusions and to make blood products has failed.

The virus likely to cause AIDS has been detected in patients treated with NHS blood concentrate in both England and Scotland, and yesterday the haemophilia Society of Great Britain said the country's blood supply could no longer be guaranteed pure.

In America, where AIDS is well established among the homosexual

YORKSHIRE POST EXCLUSIVE
By ANGUS KING, Medical Correspondent

community, people have also died after being given the disease accidentally in contaminated blood.

The victims have been hospital patients receiving blood transfusions and haemophiliacs who are treated routinely with a blood product called Factor 8.

In Britain, there are as yet no reported transfusion cases, but three haemophiliacs have inadvertently been given AIDS. Two are now dead.

Some 60 per cent of Britain's Factor 8 is imported from the United States and this was thought most likely to be responsible for passing on the virus. But it is now clear that the blood

collecting service and supply in Britain is itself contaminated.

Tests on haemophilic patients at Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary have revealed AIDS virus antibodies in several patients. This means that they have been exposed to the virus itself, and it is possible they may develop the disease.

The crucial element in these tests was that the patients had been treated only with Factor 8 produced by the NHS in Scotland. An additional concern is that all Northern Ireland's supplies of Factor 8 are produced in Edinburgh by the Scottish Protein Fractionation Centre.

It is now known that two batches of Factor 8 produced at the Government's blood products laboratory at Elstree, Herts, were also contaminated.

In this country Factor 8 is made from plasma taken from whole blood given by volunteers. Doctors working in haemophilia centres consider that the NHS blood supply has been compromised and is no longer safe for their patients.

Yesterday the Haemophilia Centre Directors Organisation said it was issuing a policy recommendation to 100 medical units in Britain that patients should no longer be treated with the NHS product.

Dr. Peter Jones, director of the haemophilia unit at Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary, has already stopped using NHS Factor 8. All material for his patients will now be a new and more costly heat-treated Factor 8 imported from the U.S. by the Northern Regional Health Authority.

This heat-treated product is thought to be AIDS free, but is not available in England. Pressure from doctors on the Government has not made available any funds to deal with the present emergency involving haemophiliacs.

Dr. Christopher Ludlam, a consultant haematologist and director of the haemophilia centre at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, admitted yesterday that antibodies to the suspected AIDS virus had been found recently in 16 of the NHS material. He told the Yorkshire Post:

"We picked up the HTLV 3 antibodies as part of a research project. We had hoped they would not be there. What this means is that these patients have been exposed to the virus."

"We know it was not from an American blood product — because all these patients have been treated only with Scottish Factor 8. They may or may not still have the virus — it is something we cannot tell."

This amounts to evidence that the material in Scotland has been contaminated with HTLV 3, and this must have come from a donor or donors who have the virus.

"I can categorically say that to date there have been no cases of AIDS in Scotland attributable to Scottish Factor 8. My patients are all clinically well at the moment."

"On present evidence it would appear that although AIDS may be caused by HTLV 3 only a small percentage of people who become infected actually develop the disease. "We do not know why?"

Partly as a result of this discovery, all Factor 8 in Scotland is being heat treated to kill the virus. This does not mean that people who unknowingly carry the AIDS virus will stop giving blood. Whole blood cannot be heat treated to make it safe, because it just congeals.

News of the positive testing was broken to haemophiliacs from Edinburgh and Glasgow at a meeting last night. They were told collectively that



FAIR EXCHANGE . . . the Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, swap documents after signing the historic accord with China in 1997.

Bomb victim helps the Tories through

By JOHN FISHER and PETER HANNAM

THREE Tories voted against the Government and another 40 abstained on last night's division at the end of the emergency debate on plans to curb total spending.

The three rebels were Mr. Den Dover (Chorley), Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering), and Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn).

Tory rebels claimed that more than 50 deliberately abstained, but Whips put the figure at less than 40. So many MPs had left for the Christmas break that it was impossible to be precise.

The Government Chief Whip, Mr. John Wakeham, helped in the operation to contain the revolt.

The Whip's appeal was based on loyalty to the Prime Minister when she was out of the country, the slide in the value of the pound, and perhaps most effective of all, Mr. Wakeham's presence for his first major vote since being injured by the Brighton bomb.

The Government's majority of 100 was far better than looked possible as the Environment Secretary, Mr. Patrick Jenkin, was given another hard time after his roasting of the previous day.

Tories gave the warning that failure to return to looser arrangements on councils' capital spending would provoke a fresh rebellion in the New Year.

Mr. Jenkin, bloodied but unbowed amid the outcry at the £1,000m. treasury-imposed cuts, fights another day.

A former Environment Minister, Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham), led Tory demands for flexibility to be given to authorities in need.

The crisis was triggered when Mr. Jenkin announced that the amount councils will be allowed to spend on capital programmes from the receipts of asset sales is being slashed.

Tories incensed that authorities would be able to spend only 20 per cent. of the proceeds of council house sales — the virus

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Wall Street
On the New York Stock Exchange last night, the Dow Jones industrial average closed 3.53 points lower at 1208.04. — UPI.

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Post Classified advertisements talk to thousands of people

£95,000-a-year defence job row

A STORM of protest blew up last night over the Government's decision to appoint a £95,000 a year supreme of defence buying, Mr. Peter Levene, 43, who heads one of Britain's top arms companies.

The move was greeted with outrage by Labour MPs and disbelieved by some Tory back-benchers.

They say he should have been ruled out because of a possible conflict of interest — and his high salary also brought bitter comment.

Mr. Levene recently acted as a personal adviser to the Defence Secretary, Mr. Michael Heseltine, so the announcement was greeted with "jobs for the boys" claims.

He is chairman of United Scientific Holdings, which makes tank turrets, gun sights and the Alvis range of tanks. That job will be taken over by the former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Defence Ministry, Sir Frank Cooper.

The Shadow Defence Secretary, Mr. Denzil Davies, said the moves "called into question the impartiality of the Secretary of State in defence procurement."

The Tory chairman of the All Party Defence Select Committee, Sir Humphrey Atkins, said they had "no advance knowledge" of Mr. Levene's appointment.

UK-Sino pact opens gates to Hong Kong

THE Prime Minister and China's Communist leaders toasted each other in champagne yesterday after signing the agreement transferring the control of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Mrs. Thatcher pointedly lifted her glass to the 101 Hong Kong representatives who watched the ceremony in Peking's Great Hall of the People.

An historic day was crowned by the news that the Queen had accepted Premier Zhao Ziyang's invitation to visit China. In turn, Mr. Zhao accepted Mrs. Thatcher's invitation to come to Britain, probably next June. A British trade delegation, headed by Lord Young, Minister without Portfolio, also plans to visit China next spring.

The day began with a glittering military parade in the Prime Minister's honour, a 19-gun salute and scores of singing children banging tambourines and waving ribbons and flowers.

Then the two leaders walked into the Eastern Hall for formal talks, before getting down to the real business of Mrs. Thatcher's trip — the signing of the Hong Kong agreement.

One set will be kept in Peking, the other will return with the Prime Minister to London. After ratification, some time next year, they will be deposited with the United Nations.

After signing, Mrs. Thatcher described the agreement as a landmark in the life of the territory, in the course of Anglo-Chinese relations and in the history of international diplomacy.

But she admitted: "At certain points there were difficult decisions to be made on both sides. There were moments of tension. To overcome these difficulties we needed to draw on a shared fund of good will, on friendship and on a common commitment to Hong Kong's future."

"The concept of one country, two systems preserving two different political, social and economic systems within one nation has no precedent."

At a Press conference later, Thatcher was swift to dispel suggestion that Britain had Hong Kong away and stress would have gone back in 1997.

"We had to do what was good as we could."

"I think the result is good for people of Hong Kong. We have absolute assurances, again and again, that China traditionally keeps agreements — and will keep this one."

Later she lunched with the President, Mr. Li Xiangnan and talks with the 80-year-old Chai Mr. Deng Xiaoping, who, although holding no official status in the hierarchy, is regarded as its powerful man.

He told her: "Failure to solve Hong Kong question has cast a shadow over relations between us. Now, it has been removed."

She then met the Communist general secretary, Mr. Hu Yaobang, the man regarded as most likely to succeed Chairman Deng.

Mrs. Thatcher played down latest revolt by Conservative MP told reporters: "I just get the feeling that you get all these things from a different perspective."

Rebel Tories had joined Opponents on Tuesday in blocking committee stage of the Civil Av Bill. It was the second time the Bill had been blocked, giving Transport Secretary, Mr. Nicholas Ley, his second serious setback week.

The Government also faced a t in the Commons from Conserv after the Environment Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, announced cur councils' spending of money raising council houses.

Labour has labelled the cuts effective £40m. drop in investment and a £1,200m. free councils' assets.

Editorial comment—P.8.

Gas prices up 4.5 per cent

GAS prices will go up four and a half per cent. from February 1.

There will be no increase in standing charges, and British Gas says it intends holding prices for the rest of 1985.

The increase had been widely predicted, but is in line with the British Gas chairman, Sir Denis Rooke's dictum that it would be no more the cost of inflation.

British Gas made £668m. profit year. The rise has been cause Government financial targets, make the corporation give more to the Treasury.

THIRTY striking miners' children from Nottinghamshire left East Midlands airport yesterday for a week in the south of France, paid for by French trade unionists.

THE COST of policing the miners' dispute in Derbyshire has now risen to over £22.8m., it will be reported to the county's police committee on Friday.

son fined £100

THE SON of the Scottish miners' president, Mr. Mick McGahey, was fined £100 yesterday. Michael McGahey junior, of Glashill Terrace, Penicuik, near Edinburgh, denied that he struggled with police, forcing them on to the main road outside Sartmore open cast mine, Lochgelly, or that he forced lorries to stop. Dunfermline Sheriff Court heard that McGahey linked arms with other pickets as lorries carrying coal drove out of the mine.

After the first complaint he told his dental nurse to make sure he was not left alone with a female patient who had been sedated. He said the first thing he knew about the second allegation of indecent assault — in 1983 — was when the complainant's husband returned to his surgery and began hammering on the window and swearing at him.

an industrial tribunal said yesterday. It decided that Mrs. Gillian Perry, 21, was too young and too vulnerable for the questions and that management failed to protect her. The tribunal at Birmingham said that Mrs. Perry, of Boyne Road, Sheldon, Birmingham, was a victim of sex discrimination, and now she could receive up to £2,000

NHS blood carries killer virus

From page one

some of them were carrying AIDS antibodies.

Dr. Ludlam said: "If individual patients want to know where they stand I shall tell them."

Patients were strongly advised that from now on they should wear contraceptive sheaths during intercourse to protect their partners from danger.

They were also urged to take every precaution when making up their Factor 8 for home injections, and disposing of needles, syringes and plastic gloves.

Stringest safety precautions are already in force to protect medical and laboratory staff who are handling the blood at Edinburgh Infirmary.

I was told yesterday by another centre director: "Two centres here in London have had the same experience. Two batches of Factor 8 from Elstree have been contaminated with the AIDS virus."

At St. Thomas's Hospital, London, which serves haemophiliacs from SE and SW Thames areas, two patients who received exclusively NHS Factor 8 from Elstree are also carrying the suspected AIDS virus antibodies.

The director of the haemophilia centre there, Dr. Geoffrey Savage, said: "It is going to be hell on earth when this comes out. I am dumping all my commercial Factor 8 from the U.S. in favour of heat treated material.

"The majority of my patients will be getting it within the next three days. It is more difficult politically and practically to dump the NHS Factor 8, because if I did that straight away the switch-over would bankrupt hospitals in the area. It will have to be phased out.

"I am not prepared to wait and expose my patients to the risk. It is a horrible issue and a horrible dilemma."

Recent evidence suggested that NHS Factor 8 which is not heat treated might be contaminated.

"One cannot be sure, and from the patients' point of view it would be better not to use it until one is damn sure it is OK," said Dr. Savage.

Prof. Arthur Bloom, at University College, Cardiff, who is chairman of the Haemophilia Centre Directors Organisation, said he was aware of some problems with two batches of NHS Factor 8, one produced in Scotland and the other from Elstree.

"Regrettable though this is, it does not really constitute a comparable situation with the USA, where I believe almost every batch of Factor 8 is contaminated.

"As a matter of policy, we are now going to stop using NHS Factor 8 until it can be heat treated. The main thing that publicity can do now is to push the Government to make sure we can become self sufficient in heat treated Factor 8 in this country as soon as possible."

The Haemophilia Society said yes-

terday that it has warned the Government of the danger.

The co-ordinator, Mr. David Watters, said: "We drew the attention of the Department of Health to our worries about blood donor screening in the UK some months ago. We are not surprised therefore by the news that Scottish Factor 8 has been found to be contaminated with the HTLV 3 virus.

"This underlines the very great urgency attached to the immediate introduction of heat treated Factor 8, which the Haemophilia Society, along with the Yorkshire Post, has been pressing for since early November.

"We believe that apart from haemophilia itself there is, at the present time, no risk greater than AIDS. In recent weeks we have been all but overwhelmed by requests for accurate information and action to reduce the risks involved with blood products.

"What we must do at all costs is to try to avoid further spread of the virus. I have just spoken to a mother who has taken her kid off treatment. It is the worst thing to do — it can mean joint damage, ruined lives and the possibility of fatal bleeds."

The AIDS virus — Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome — destroys part of the human body's natural defences against disease, and leaves the way open for killer infections.

As yet there is no test available to detect it, there is no cure, and it may be present in the body without obvious effect for between 28 months and five

years. During passed onto ot

Even the antibodies can wide scale bec ties.

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AIDS has 1 7,000 victims 100 from cor sions and a si cases reporte

Some 70 p white, male nous drug ab the virus is p — anal inte homosexual hyperdermic making these risk.

Scientists the suspecte destroyed by 70deg.C. As a being widely lia and Ger philiacs.

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