

Petition

Background

Haemophilia is a genetic condition, most often hereditary, although in many cases the genetic abnormality occurs spontaneously. People with haemophilia lack, to varying degrees, the ability to clot their blood, which can result in internal bleeding into joints and muscles, and in more dangerous cases, into internal organs. This can result in severe pain and be quite debilitating, and sometimes more seriously it can result in organ damage and even death. Treatment for the condition has historically included bed-rest, cooling the affected area, and latterly the replacement of the missing 'clotting factor' using donor blood products, such as plasma and cryoprecipitate.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, haemophiliacs began using a revolutionary new product to treat their condition. 'Factor concentrates' were heralded as the way forward in haemophilia treatment, and profit-hungry pharmaceutical companies wasted little time in harvesting blood from the cheapest possible sources in order to make as much of the product as they could.

As haemophiliacs began using the products, it soon became apparent that something was wrong. People began dying. In their haste to push out as much factor VIII and IX as possible, the pharmaceutical companies had been sourcing donor blood from extremely dubious places. People known to be habitual drug users or those participating in homosexual activities, prostitutes, and other people with infectious diseases such as HIV and various strains of Hepatitis were routinely allowed, and in many cases paid, to give blood (see Kelly Duda's excellent film "Factor 8: The Arkansas Prison Blood Scandal" <http://www.factor8movie.com/> and WorldNetDaily's articles). The companies themselves would then pool the plasma together with hundreds of other donations, thus contaminating many thousands of units of factor concentrate. This product was then shipped around the world and given to thousands of haemophiliacs.

In Britain, more than 4,800 haemophiliacs were infected with Hepatitis C, and 1,200 of those with HIV. Many have already died from their infections. In the case of those given HIV, only 380 or so people are still alive.

Yet still the tragedy deepens, as the legacy of this disaster means that many spouses, partners and loved ones of those infected through blood have themselves become infected... many because people were not told that they had been infected until years after infection took place.

In 1991, under threat of court action for allowing knowingly contaminated blood products into the country, the British Government made ex-gratia payments to those infected with HIV, at an average of £60,000, upon the condition that haemophiliacs would sign an undertaking not to sue the Government for any future infection through their treatments. The so called 'compassionate payments' were made in respect of the projected life span of sufferers of three to five years, and were forced upon patients who were told that "if you don't drop the legal action and accept this money, no-one will get anything... people are dying, they need it". Shortly afterwards, it emerged that those same people were also infected with Hepatitis C, and that this information had been withheld from them until they had signed the undertaking. Many people did not find out about either infection until years after they occurred.

The Government and the pharmaceutical companies were banking upon none of their victims remaining alive long enough to fight for justice. The Government to this day refuses to hold a public inquiry into the events surrounding almost 2,000 deaths so far, and many more likely.

Our aims

This tragedy, dubbed by Lords Robert Winston and Alf Morris as "...the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS...", has killed, widowed and destroyed the lives of thousands. The survivors, and those that the people who didn't survive left behind, are calling for:

A public inquiry surrounding the events that led to thousands of British haemophiliacs' infections with HIV and Hepatitis C

Proper compensation for the victims and the families of those people who have died.

We deserve answers as to why this has happened, and we need to be able to live, not just exist. The people we entrusted with our lives have wronged us, but they have also underestimated the will and strength of the survivors of this tragedy, and now we are bringing the fight to them. We will not stop until justice is done!

Read the stories of some of those affected by this disaster at the 'Forgotten Victims' Observer blog. Please contact us if you would like more information about our campaign.

Petition

Please sign here with your name and your full postal address or email address if you would like to express support for our campaign and petition for a full, independent public inquiry into contaminated blood (see separate sheet to read about the background to our campaign and its aims).

The more voices we get, the more clearly we can be heard. Unless you consent to receiving future information, your address or email address is for verification purposes only and will not be used. For our campaign to work, we need to prove that every individual that signs up with us actually exists and is unique. Once the sheet is complete, please send it to the address above. Thank you for supporting us!

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