

11/11/85

DAILY TELEGRAPH

US blood caused Aids 6

No profit in blood

From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health. 18

SIR — I feel I must comment on certain points made in your leader (Nov. 15) under the heading "Blood Money" in which an extract from a letter from Mr A. G. McFarlane was reprinted. Contrary to Mr McFarlane's understanding, there is no question of a profit being made by the public sector from these handling charges, which are intended solely to cover the administrative costs of collecting and supplying the blood.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the charges contain no element of cost for the blood itself, which is freely donated for use where it is needed. Although private sector hospitals will be entitled to pass on these new charges to their patients, it will remain a strict condition of supply that no profit is to be made from blood or its derivatives supplied by the National Blood Transfusion Service.

The Government welcomes the growth of an independent sector in medicine and seeks to encourage co-operation with the N.H.S. Indeed, the right of patients and doctors to choose private treatment can only add to the country's health care resources and reduce pressure on State services. However, it also believes that the independent sector should be self-supporting. The N.H.S. should not be out of pocket in providing services to the independent sector on an agency basis and we have decided that it would be equitable and logical to make an economic charge to reimburse regional health authorities for the cost of collecting, processing, handling and transporting blood and blood derivatives.

While the level of charges has not yet been finalised — they will be a matter for discussion with the N.H.S. and the independent sector — we anticipate that the handling charge for each unit of whole blood will be only a fraction of the figure which you quote in your leader.

We are rightly proud of our voluntary blood donation system in this country and have no desire to see it undermined. Nor do we intend to change the principle on which the National Blood Transfusion Service is based: blood should be available to all who need it.

GUY CARTER
London, S.E.1.

By Andrew Veitch,
Medical Correspondent

The British haemophiliac who died from Aids almost certainly caught the disease from contaminated supplies of the blood-clotting agent Factor VIII, imported from the US, doctors report today.

The man, aged 55, caught Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome a few weeks after being given US Factor VIII for the first time — hitherto he had been treated exclusively with British supplies.

"It seems highly probable that the development of Aids was related to this treatment. This case provides further evidence for a link between blood products and Aids," Dr Helena Daly and Dr Geoffrey Scott, blood specialists at Bristol Royal Infirmary, report in the Lancet today.

Doctors in Manchester are

monitoring other haemophiliacs who received Factor VIII from the same batch. A haemophiliac in Cardiff is reported to have developed the disease.

The Bristol man, who was married and had children, was given a large amount of US Factor VIII in December 1981. He fell ill in January and died 18 months later after developing herpes and candidiasis in and around his mouth, hepatitis B and pneumonia.

Britain's 4,500 haemophiliacs are being urged to keep taking Factor VIII, whatever the source. Last month, Scottish researchers reported that the US supplies seemed no more dangerous than the Scottish variety.

The US Factor VIII chosen for the Scottish tests came from the Alpha Therapeutic Corporation, which has banned plasma from Aids areas.

DAILY EXPRESS

THEIR LAST WORD

I WOULD dearly love to know how a handling charge of £19 for a pint of freely-given blood to private hospitals is reached when I can get a pint of milk on my doorstep for 21p.

Miss S. A. Brown, Comrie, Perthshire.

Thanks yes it is ok.

Have you seen? On X - is it ok for me to continue to say "there is no conclusive proof that the disease has been transmitted by American blood products"

As Congratulate you on your promotion.

23.11.

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