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56 are given AIDS killer blood

Alert as homosexual
admits being a donor

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BLOOD which has been infected with the killer AIDS virus has been given to 56 people, it was revealed yesterday.

Fifteen of the recipients are Scots. Another 32, including a pregnant woman, are from England, and nine others are from Wales.

Most are haemophiliacs, but none has yet contracted the disease—although it has an incubation period of up to four years.

Shocked experts at the Blood Transfusion Service made the discovery when the patients mysteriously developed antibodies to the AIDS virus, which is normally transmitted by homosexuals.

They horrified doctors at a Edinburgh hospital. It discovered that a young homosexual who is seriously ill with AIDS had been a regular blood donor all over England.

Destroyed

The blood was used for transfusions to patients in the Midlands and the North but mostly in the South and in Wales. The contaminated blood given to Scots patients is not thought to come from the same source. "We are still trying to identify the donor," said a Scottish Office spokesman.

Doctors believe there is little chance of the 56 contracting AIDS, but they will be monitored.

Amounts of parts of the homosexual's donated blood have been destroyed. Other stored blood has been heat treated to kill the AIDS virus.

It is not known whether the blood donated in Leeds and Birmingham is infected, because the man may not have had AIDS at the time.

The virus, which destroys the body's natural defence mechanisms against disease, has to date claimed 102 victims in Britain, of whom 44 have died.

Doctors fear that next year the toll could run into thousands. Health officials are searching for homosexuals not to give blood.

Tests that can trace disease

THE AIDS virus was discovered among the 18 Scots patients when recently developed tests showed up traces of antibodies to the disease in their blood.

Dr Frank Boulton, deputy head of the Edinburgh Blood Transfusion Service, said:

"Previously the only way that AIDS was diagnosed was by the Elmsa test. But the tests have not been around long enough for us to know what degree of immunity the presence of the antibodies indicates."

