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# 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

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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 haemophiliac 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 18 of his patients who were receiving only 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

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