

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of remote inquiry hearings

This week haemophilia care in Northern Ireland has been the focus of the inquiry. Written evidence from Dr Elizabeth Mayne, director of Belfast Haemophilia Centre (BHC) from 1978 –1999, was used in a presentation by inquiry counsel.

Dr Mayne first used commercial concentrate in 1970, having returned from the US where she saw it being used. With two exceptions, children at BHC were

treated with cryoprecipitate. Of the 112 patients at the centre exposed to factor treatment, 16 developed HIV (14%) and 76 developed hepatitis (72%). One partner was also infected with HIV.

A 14-year-old boy tested positive for HIV in 1985. In a letter sent that year, Dr Mayne said she had not told the boy or his parents, due to their "precarious family base". There was evidence of "significant" delays

in giving hepatitis C diagnosis and of underplaying the seriousness of the virus.

Dr Mayne's "paternal" approach to patient relationships was commented on by Sir Brian Langstaff.

Dr Gary Benson, director of BHC since 2008, gave moving testimony about the impact of the scandal on his patients. He said more should be done today to recognise the suffering of bereaved parents and children.

Inquiry news in focus: future hearings

There will now be a break in public hearings until May 17, although the inquiry's investigative work continues. When hearings resume, the first topic will be the current infected blood support schemes. From May 24 there will be more evidence from The Haemophilia Society and campaigners will give evidence the week of 7 June. Also in June will be a presentation on the smaller haemophilia centres and then from June 21, an investigation of Treloar's. The much anticipated evidence from government starts from 19 July and is scheduled for two weeks. After the summer break, during which the inquiry will move offices to a new location in Aldwych, London, hearings will resume from 20 September with blood services and pharmaceutical suppliers under investigation.

Quotes of the week

"There's an element of using the patients to an extent as guinea pigs. I don't mean in the sense of having a different treatment but in the sense of having a different product."

Sir Brian Langstaff on a proposed switch of Belfast's allocation of NHS product for commercial factor from Scotland in 1988

"After careful appraisal I remain convinced that the course of action pursued by both myself and my colleagues was measured and appropriate for that time in light of the information and the state of knowledge at the time."

Dr Elizabeth Mayne

"These men, I say their names with pride. They did nothing to warrant what happened... It wasn't their fault they got HIV, they didn't deserve to die of AIDS. But they did." Dr Gary Benson

"The inquiry depends upon all its participants for its success. You have passed on the benefits of your own insights, your own questions. There is a lot more work to be done. But it is being done." Sir Brian Langstaff