

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of inquiry hearings

Treloar's College, a boarding school for children with physical disabilities in Hampshire, has been investigated this week.

Campaigners believe that 72 former pupils with haemophilia who were infected with HIV and/or hepatitis have now died. The inquiry heard parents were not kept informed about their sons' treatment, nor told about its risks. There was a history of clinical research being carried

out on this "unique" group of children with shocking evidence that some had been recruited to the school specifically to be used for research.

Inquiry counsel, Jenani Richards QC, said this long pattern of research may have led to a mindset among clinicians that the Treloar's boys were first and foremost "objects for research and study" rather than individuals.

Former pupils described being given

their HIV diagnoses alone at the school, without support—some even having to break the news to their parents themselves. Former headmaster Alec Macpherson remembered the "rage" of those infected. He said he couldn't believe haematologists at Treloar's had known about AIDS before he was told in 1985, but evidence showed the boys were being observed for signs of the virus from February 1983.

Inquiry in focus: John, Leigh and Jason Peach

Leigh and Jason Peach, who both had severe haemophilia A, attended Treloar's College, starting in 1978 and 1981 respectively. It was at Treloar's that they both were first treated with US commercial concentrates. Although he visited them most weekend, their father, John, was not kept informed about their treatment. In 1985, both boys were diagnosed with HIV. In heart-breaking testimony, Mr Peach said his boys tried to make the best of what time they had—Leigh worked as a graphic designer and Jason had a job as a local estate agent. But when AIDS started to be featured in the media their world fell apart and they felt stigmatised. After receiving the ex-gratia payout in 1991, Leigh got married and Jason moved in with his girlfriend. At first, their health held up but after starting AZT treatment Jason deteriorated and in 1993 he died, aged 23. Mr Peach sobbed as he told the inquiry that he'd held his son's hand when he died. He said: "I just couldn't believe that he'd gone." Five months later, Leigh died aged 27. The inquiry was shown photos of Mr Peach with his young sons. Looking at the images, he said: "I miss these boys every day."

Quotes of the week

"We're known to be self-reliant and tough and resilient, but we shouldn't have to be. You shouldn't have to survive in life. You should be able to thrive in life. That's what we've lost." Nick Sainsbury, Treloar's pupil

"We gave it to them. We were trying to treat them, trying to make them healthy...we added another catastrophe to the disaster they already live under." Dr Aronstam on HIV, speaking in 1987

"I have guilt, still being here. It's stigma, losing 72 friends, school friends, who you've known since you were that high. I think I'm an angry old man now." Gary Webster, Treloar's pupil

"There was nothing you could do about it. They were infected, they were going to die and that was it. You just had to help them get on with life and live life to the full. Our way of doing it was trying to keep them busy." Former Treloar's headmaster Alec Macpherson

"I've tended to always have a positive outlook on life. It's just another thing to battle... I try to put the problems at the back of my mind and...see something positive out of it. And that's the way I've always lived. And I think maybe that's part of the reason why I'm still here." Lee Stay, Treloar's pupil, co-infected, who's had a liver transplant and two forms of cancer

"Rather than receiving any kind of help or support...we were effectively left to go and die with our families in houses behind locked doors." Mr BC, pupil