

The Infected Blood Inquiry weekly summary

The
Haemophilia
Society

A summary of inquiry hearings: week of 31 January 2022

Dr Frank Boulton was director of Liverpool Haemophilia Centre from 1975 to 1980 before moving to Edinburgh and SE Scotland Blood Transfusion Service. He said while BTS colleagues were fairly convinced AIDS was transmitted through an 'infectious particle' by May 1983, some haemophilia clinicians were reluctant to

confront the 'unthinkable' prospect of withdrawing factor treatment. He and centre director Dr Ludlam had 'blood pressure-raising' exchanges but developed an effective working relationship, he said. On moving to Wessex BTS in 1990 he found 'disgraceful' record keeping – with historic records discovered in an old building, covered in bird

droppings. Dr Boulton encountered 'consultant-led' resistance to the 1995 hepatitis C look-back. Dr Gamal Gabra worked at Glasgow BTS from 1974 to 1989. Its HQ had such poor facilities that in 1982 inspectors concluded it could no longer make freeze-dried cryoprecipitate on the premises. A purpose-built facility was not opened until 1992.

Inquiry focus: Belfast Blood Transfusion Service

Dr Morris McClelland was responsible for Belfast Blood Transfusion Service from 1980 to 2009. The impact of the recession in the 80s led to reduced workplace blood donor sessions and The Troubles presented extra challenges. Plasma was processed at BPL Elstree when he arrived but switched to PFC in Edinburgh in mid-1982. Although in 1984 Dr McClelland claimed his region was self-sufficient in blood products, 'virtually all' treatment at Belfast Haemophilia Centre until the end of '84 used commercial factor products. Dr McClelland regularly met centre director Dr Mayne, but felt it would have been 'inappropriate' to have tried to influence her prescribing practices. Blood donor sessions from prisoners was stopped in 1983, but armed forces' donations continued to be a 'valuable' way of maintaining supply. He was concerned non-A non-B hepatitis was being underreported by hospitals in the region and tried to change this.

Quotes of the week

'We estimated that there have been approximately 13,500 HCV infections transmitted by HCV-infected blood components issued between 1 January 1980 and 1 September 1991. Over 8,300 (61%) of these were either known or expected to have died by end of 1995.'

Study published in 2002 on hepatitis C transmission in England, co-authored by Dr Gabra.

'Our own careful investigation (including liver biopsy) of over 100 donors infected with HCV up to 20 years ago through needle-sharing, clearly suggests a generally benign long-term prognosis.'

Dr Fereydoun Ala, director of Birmingham Blood Transfusion Centre, 1994.

'There was an educational issue among some clinicians about the importance of reporting and, in some cases, even about the existence of non-A non-B hepatitis'.

Dr Morris McClelland

'There was...a sense of wishful thinking among the haemophilia treating community that this awful condition [AIDS] was not down to any infection but might go away because it was not very common yet in the UK.'

Dr Boulton