

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of inquiry hearings from London

Dr Mark Winter became the first clinician to give evidence to the inquiry this week.

A new consultant at the Kent Haemophilia Centre in Margate in 1983, Dr Winter described the "hardest decision of his life" in opting to give his patients unlicensed American heat treated factor VIII in May 1984.

Dismissed by Professor Arthur Bloom as "mad", the decision was criticised by many clinicians. In Oct 1984 when he got the HIV test results for his 31 patients, all but one was positive. Dr Winter said he now realised that his patients had already been infected with HIV before they

started using heat treated factor. He said it would probably have prevented HIV if taken early enough, but would not have stopped hepatitis C. Dr Winter said: "If you were a haemophiliac patient in Britain and you'd had factor VIII once, it was extraordinarily likely that you would have hepatitis C. I do not believe hepatitis C was avoidable in regularly treated patients." However, he concluded that if self-sufficiency in blood products had been achieved in 1977, the "catastrophic" rate of HIV infection in haemophiliacs may have been avoided.

Dr Winter spoke about

his time as a medical trustee with the Macfarlane Trust from 1995. He also described the "difficult, awkward and unsettling" conversations he had with patients over the emerging risk of cCJD which he feared could be "AIDS Part 2".

Earlier in the week the inquiry heard about the role of Prof Bloom from the Cardiff Haemophilia Centre. Evidence was shown that in the same week he wrote a statement for The Haemophilia Society stating he was unaware of any "proven" cases of AIDS in the UK, the first UK case of AIDS in a haemophiliac was confirmed at Bloom's own centre in Cardiff.

Inquiry news

If you are registered to attend a hearing at the Infected Blood Inquiry in the next few weeks you may be asked to confirm whether you still plan to come. On one day this week 60% of the people who'd said they would attend did not turn up. If you can't come, this is not a problem. Please let the inquiry know beforehand by calling 0808 169 1377 so they can offer your place to someone else.

Next week's evidence will feature Dr Brian Colvin of the Royal London Hospital from 6-7 October followed by presentations on St Thomas' Haemophilia Centre on 8 October and Oxford Haemophilia Centre on Friday 9 October.

Quotes of the week

"You knew from that moment that whatever part of the haemophilia community you were in life would never, ever be the same again. This was the start of something dreadful and you knew that immediately."

Dr Mark Winter on the moment in Oct 1984 when he got the results of his patients' HIV tests. All but one were positive.

"The doctors didn't feel comfortable about it. It was recognised as being an Achilles heel of a treatment that was otherwise spectacularly successful."

Dr Winter on the known risks of factor VIII concentrate.

"I suspect it is only a matter of time before you begin to see cases in the UK."

Dr Bruce Evatt to Prof Bloom about AIDS in US haemophiliacs, written March 1983.

"It was agreed that each clinician would decide for each case depending on the facts of the case but in general to provide information if asked for. "

Advice to Haemophilia Centre Directors on whether to inform patients of HIV diagnosis, Dec 1984.