

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
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A summary of inquiry hearings from London

Evidence came from Prof Charles Hay, director of Manchester Haemophilia Centre since 1994. He previously worked in Liverpool 87-94 and spent the early part of his haematology career from 1979-87 in hospitals in Sheffield. His boss at Sheffield Haemophilia Centre, Prof Eric Preston, also gave evidence. He couldn't remember much detail and evidence he gave to the Lindsay Tribunal in 2001 was used.

Over two days of evidence Prof Hay covered knowledge of hepatitis C, his response to the AIDS crisis, recombinant products, the threat of vCJD and his thoughts on campaigners and a public inquiry.

He said that by the early 80s there was an "international consensus" that hep C was a relatively benign condition. But evidence of liver damage in a patient from 1983 made him revise that view.

He was asked about the National Haemophilia Database and said from 2000 "implicit consent" was obtained from patients.

Prof Hay said he and other clinicians were surprised by claims of a "conspiracy of silence" by campaigners. He said: "When patients said 'we want to know the truth', we weren't quite sure what truth they were after..we felt that we had been quite open."

Inquiry news—lockdown 2 update

The second national lockdown will not stop the work of the Infected Blood Inquiry, its chair Sir Brian Langstaff insisted this week. He announced that the inquiry will continue as timetabled, but hearings will now take place using a video link and members of the public cannot attend in person. The only people in the hearing room in Fleetbank House in London will be Sir Brian, the inquiry's legal team, the witness's legal representative and a few inquiry staff.

The next hearings take place from Tuesday 17 November when the inquiry sits for four days of evidence, beginning with Dr Saad Al-Ismaail from Swansea Haemophilia Centre. He will be followed by Dr Vivian Mitchell from Leicester Haemophilia Centre and then Dr Paul Giangrande from Oxford Haemophilia Centre.

Quotes of the week

"Many people have been waiting years for the answers this inquiry is tasked with delivering - the inquiry's work is too important to wait."

Sir Brian Langstaff on continuing the inquiry during lockdown 2

"For a severely infected haemophiliac receiving two vials of concentrate weekly, we can calculate that that is equivalent to many, many millions of blood transfusions. And so each time a vial was infused...it would be an enormous amount of virus at each treatment."

Prof Preston on why hep C progressed quicker in the haemophilia community than other groups

"It [AIDS] was widely reported, patients did ask about it and, to be honest, we weren't able to quantify the risks."

Prof Hay on the emerging knowledge of AIDS in 1983

"Many centre directors are already fighting a low grade guerilla war with patient activists who want a hepatitis C public enquiry."

Letter from Prof Hay in 2005