

# The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE  
HAEMOPHILIA  
SOCIETY

## ***A summary of remote inquiry hearings***

David Watters, former general secretary of The Haemophilia Society from 1981–1994, gave evidence this week.

He described HIV and AIDS as “dominating” his time with the charity. The inquiry looked at THS’s publications from 1983 onwards and Mr Watters was questioned about its reliance on the expert opinion of Prof Bloom. Mr Watters said it was “entirely reasonable” for THS

to have turned to Prof Bloom due to his position as chair of UKHCDO.

In May 1983 it was agreed that “until there is evidence to prove otherwise, The Society’s policy would be to encourage members to continue with their present treatment programme, subject to the advice of their centre directors.”

Asked if THS “downplayed” the risk of AIDS, Mr Watters said based on the evidence

known at the time, it did not.

The inquiry also looked at THS’s role in the ex-gratia financial settlement in 1991, hepatitis C knowledge, its dealings with government and its relationship with pharmaceutical companies.

Mr Watters said his “heart ached” for the victims of contaminated blood and their families left with an “empty seat at every family meal”.

## ***Inquiry news: Newcastle Haemophilia Centre***

The inquiry finished its presentation on Newcastle Haemophilia Centre and its former director Dr Peter Jones this week. Inquiry Counsel, Jenni Richards QC, examined Dr Jones’ “particularly strong links” with pharmaceutical companies—he worked as a consultant for Hyland, Revlon Care Health Group and Armour. She also looked at what Dr Jones said he told his patients and what patients said they’d been told. According to Dr Jones, by the late 70s he’d told patients they were “inevitably” infected with NANB hepatitis, but Ms Richards said patients’ evidence was “to the opposite effect”. Extracts from the BBC Radio 4 programme *The Reunion* were read out, in which Dr Jones dismissed the Archer Report as “useless” and claimed “self-centred” and “acquisitive” people “lied” in evidence.

## **Quotes of the week**

“Professor Bloom was still the person regarded by his peers as the person holding authority. The UKHCDO hadn’t removed him from his position or raised any doubts and he was still holding a number of extremely distinguished positions in the world of blood products.” David Watters

“The Society have successfully got across their view that the haemophiliacs’ problems with AIDS is due to Government’s failure to ensure self sufficiency in blood products. Whilst unfair this is difficult to refute convincingly...” Internal government document, 1987

“We tried our best on the information made available to us at the time. I personally regret the things we got wrong, especially with the benefit of hindsight.” David Watters

“The Government owe an enormous debt to those who have suffered so much, too much, and it remains strongly my opinion that this calls for compensation, decent compensation that gives people independence rather than giving them begging bowls to hold out to charitable funds.”

David Watters