

Infected Blood Inquiry

1983; Prof Bloom.

Now in full covid mode Jennie Richards QC, the leading counsel to the Inquiry, continues to pick her way through file after file of minutes of meetings, correspondence and leading journals. Each document appears on the Inquiry screens. She is particularly focused on Professor Bloom from Cardiff who readers will recall was also chairman of the Haemophilia Centres group and an advisor to the Haemophiliac Society.

He later became a member of the Expert Committee on Aids. He was a major player in the field of haemophilia and involved or connected with all the major decisions about Factor 8.

His advice would have been crucial in persuading the Haemophilia Society to urge their members not to panic and stick with their existing treatment programmes. His conduct and judgement are now under review.

The Inquiry was told that 1983 was a crucial year for Haemophiliac Centre directors as evidence began to accumulate that patients with haemophilia, who had been treated with Factor 8, were contracting HIV.

The first examples were in the US but then a case emerged in Cardiff where Professor Bloom was the Director.

Around this time many Directors were beginning to switch to heat treated UK supplies of Factor 8 when they could get it. Under Blooms' leadership the Centre Directors pressured the Department of Health to purchase more Factor 8 from overseas until such time as the NHS could become self-sufficient.

There was, Bloom said, insufficient evidence to stop the importation. The perceived level of risk was insufficient to justify such a step.

There was some suggestion that he thought the American reaction to reports about infected blood had been an overreaction. The UK should avoid precipitate action. He had however passed on concerns that some American

companies might dump in the UK supplies of Factor 8 manufactured from paid donors prior to the newly published FDA rules about inappropriate donors.

The picture presented is of a man of influence coping with the possibility that a wonder drug that had reshaped his clinical practice and changed the lives of many of his patients had actually caused them harm.

He explained his dilemma to a colleague;

"We are in a catch 22 position. My committee has always been under pressure from patients and the Haemophilia Society to seek extra funding for the purchase of commercial Factor 8. We are now being pressured to administer large volumes of heat treated factor 8 without adequate clinical trials."

One senses a resentment that others were now intruding into his clinical field. The haemophilia community had suffered very 'bad luck' he told one patient. Questions about inquests and coroners will be examined later.

An interesting exchange reveals that he made the decisions in Cardiff about which manufacturer should be selected to supply Factor 8.

By contrast in the Northern Region the centre director had been instructed to put the Factor 8 business out to competitive tender.

By 1986 Bloom was clearly shifting his view and was promoting heat treated UK Factor 8.

By 1990 he was arguing for an end to imported blood. Some will argue that he was stubbornly defending established practice whilst others will see him as moving cautiously until evidence emerged that would justify a change.

This is a matter on which the Inquiry will have to make a judgement.

The examination of Bloom is paused and will be completed later.

We may then learn why, in 2019, The University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff removed his bust from the haemophilia centre at the request of his patients.

Patients in Wales have clearly judged him already.

He died in 1992.