

Sick British Children Used in Tests with Tainted Blood



London, August 27 (RHC)-- A new report in the UK points to the practice of using sick children as guinea pigs in National Health Service (NHS) experiments with tainted blood.

According to the Sunday Express, sick children were used as guinea pigs as NHS said chimps were 'too expensive' for such tests. Hemophiliac children were injected with "extraordinarily hazardous" blood products to see how infectious the products were, despite health authorities knowing for years that they were potentially fatal.

More than 2,000 people have died from contaminated blood products tainted with viruses, including hepatitis C and HIV, in the 1970s and 1980s, the report added. Many more are terminally ill.

The report said some clinics urged by officials to inject patients with the blood were overruled when they raised objections. The revelation is contained in a dossier of evidence obtained by campaigners fighting for a full and fair settlement for the victims of the worst treatment disaster in NHS history. The Express said that government health advisers ignored more than a decade of warnings.

Now Anna O'Leary, journalist and political commentator, says the NHS was aware of what it was doing and that they did not really care about their patients. "There is a complete policy of silence around what goes on "Nurses are not allowed to blow the whistle on the doctors..."

As early as 1975, they were told that the blood from the U.S. would lead to 50 to 90 percent of recipients developing hepatitis, with half of cases proving fatal. The report points to a letter to a British health official in the 70s, where the authority was warned of the dangers of using U.S.-pooled plasma from high-risk, paid "skid row" donors.

The plasma, referred to as Factor VIII, which was "extraordinarily hazardous," was thought to be a miracle treatment for hemophilia, in which the blood fails to clot properly. But demand by far outdid supply and most of it was imported from America, where in contrast to European practice, companies paid donors for their blood, an incentive that attracted drug users, prostitutes and alcoholics.

Despite officials being warned about the potential risk in 1975 and again later in 1976, this was not passed on to its users and more than 7,500 patients were infected. By the late 1970s, experts had finally accepted the link between Factor VIII and cases of hepatitis.

But government advisers still pushed the treatment. In total, 64 pupils at the school have since died from diseases that include hepatitis C and AIDS. A public health warning was eventually issued in 1981, but it did not ban use of the U.S. product.

Instead, Factor VIII was heat-treated, in the hope of destroying the viruses.

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