

Prime Minister

You will wish to be aware of the announcement by Mr Hayhoe tomorrow on AIDS, and the points of the Policy Unit.

PRIME MINISTER

25 September 1985

AIDS

On the Elstree laboratory, I think there is no reason why David Willelms should not discreetly send it out first. But I think you would want to do this on a 'one-off' and, as health visits go, a hospital night give better publicity.

Barney Hayhoe's proposed announcement tomorrow of an extra £1 million to deal with AIDS seems sensible. Although Norman Fowler's minute doesn't say so, the money will be found from within his budget: there is no claim on the Contingency Reserve.

For discussion at Monday's diary meeting?
MEM 25/9

Yes not

We have to walk a difficult tightrope between being accused of bureaucratic inertia, and being so active as to whip up public hysteria. Barney Hayhoe's announcement gets it about right. But Norman Fowler's note does not bring out two crucial political points you should be aware of.

First, about three-quarters of all AIDS cases are in the London area. So it is already being exploited by London teaching hospitals and London MPs, who argue that the RAWP formula is hitting London too hard. As you know, the Health Service is more of a losing issue for the Government in London than elsewhere. That is why Norman Fowler is, in effect, diverting extra funds to London.

Secondly, we now have the knowledge and technology to test for the AIDS virus in the blood. As from mid October, everybody giving a blood transfusion will undergo a test for AIDS. This will eliminate the already extremely low risk of

getting AIDS through a blood transfusion. The medical profession is now debating whether the results of the blood tests should be made known to the donors. They probably will be. But that may in turn fuel further popular concern about AIDS if, for example, there are hitherto unsuspected cases of AIDS amongst heterosexuals who have caught the disease via dirty drug needles, or possibly AIDS-infected prostitutes.

At the moment, only about 10% of people known to have the AIDS virus have actually contracted clinical AIDS. We simply don't know whether everybody with the virus will eventually go down with the symptoms of the disease. So we would be telling people that they may get the clinical disease, but we don't know; and if they have got it, we can't cure it. That's not a very satisfactory message, but seems to be the best course out of several unattractive alternatives.

We are spending over £30 million rebuilding the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree so that haemophiliacs, who need special blood plasma, can be supplied from our own pure sources. The Laboratory is due to be opened next year. Could I see whether it would be worthwhile you opening it yourself? It combines attractive themes - high-quality British science, action to protect innocent victims of AIDS, and spending on health infrastructure.

David Willetts
DAVID WILLETTS



CC HB

PRIME MINISTER

ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

The AIDS infection represents one of the most serious public health hazards faced by this country for many decades. With the help of our Expert Advisory Group on AIDS a range of measures has been taken to control the spread of the infection, for which there is at present no specific treatment or vaccine.

Further action is in the pipeline. Barney Hayhoe will be announcing a package of measures on 26 September. This will include new money for the Thames Regions treating the majority of UK cases, assistance to Haemophiliac Reference Centres for counselling and further support for voluntary sector organisations doing valuable information and counselling work.

Experience in the United States (they have 12,000 fully developed cases while we have just over 200) indicates that we will shortly have to deal with a number of long term problems resulting from the spread of the infection. Problems already identified lie in the areas of housing, education, insurance, employment generally and particularly in bodies like the prison service and the armed forces. Cooperation between Departments on an ad hoc basis has worked well so far, but I am sure we need to establish more formal arrangements for the resolution of problems which will arise in the areas I have mentioned.

I therefore propose to ask Barney Hayhoe to invite colleagues from those Departments which have these broader interests to join him in a Steering Group. It will direct the work of an interdepartmental team of senior officials, under DHSS chairmanship, who will explore the details of problems and make recommendations to the Steering Group.

E. R.

I think it is important that the Government should be seen to be taking action to cope not only with the public health problems involved, on which we are well advanced, but also with these wider implications. The announcement planned for 26 September will cover both aspects. I enclose a draft of what we intend to say.

I am copying this to Geoffrey Howe, Douglas Hurd, Nigel Lawson, Keith Joseph, Kenneth Baker, Leon Brittan, Michael Heseltine, David Young, George Younger, Nicholas Edwards, Tom King and to Sir Robert Armstrong.



N F

25 September 1985

THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS - MORE GOVERNMENT MONEY

Barney Hayhoe, Minister for Health, today spoke about the Government's concern about AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). He gave details of the measures already taken to control the spread of the disease, and announced that nearly £1 million more money would immediately be devoted to the fight against AIDS.

Mr Hayhoe said; "AIDS is a very serious disease. Although the number of cases in this country is still small - by the end of August this year 206 patients had been confirmed as AIDS cases of whom 114 had died - we know that the number of new cases is bound to increase steadily over the next few years. Some 10,000 people may already have been exposed to the virus, but only a small proportion of these have developed clinical AIDS. It is vital to do all we can to control the further spread of the disease and to help those who have already been exposed to the virus.

"In this country we have had the benefit of learning from the experience of the United States where more than 12,000 fully developed AIDS cases have occurred. Knowledge of the disease is progressing rapidly and much has already been achieved but much

/remains...

remains to be done. In the absence of a cure for AIDS or a vaccine which protects against the virus we must take all the precautions indicated in the light of current knowledge and experience.

"The Government has already given nearly £1 million towards combatting the disease, in addition to the resources committed by Health Authorities themselves. We will be providing a further £1 million this year to help three Thames Regions who are carrying the heaviest AIDS burden to provide treatment and counselling to those exposed to the infection. Extra funding will also be given to the Haemophilia Reference Centres to support their counselling work. Additional help will be provided to the voluntary sector too, as support for the valuable information and advice work they are doing.

"A programme of public education is the linchpin of our strategy to control the spread of the disease. We are urgently considering proposals for a National Co-ordinated Campaign of Public Education to improve understanding of the disease by those most at risk of contracting AIDS and also by the general public, and the ways in which its spread can be controlled. We must also extend our understanding of what services need to be provided for those who are infected with the virus.

"Information provided by the Thames Regional Health Authorities, which have the greatest experience in treating AIDS cases, will help us to calculate what demands are likely to be placed on the NHS. We shall also be sharpening up

/arrangements...

arrangements for ensuring interdepartmental co-operation for dealing with the wider long term issues raised by the disease."

"The Government fully understands public concern about AIDS. We are tackling the disease on a broad front and, with the continuing co-operation of those in the at-risk groups, I am hopeful that we will be able to control the spread of the disease and reduce the appalling suffering which accompanies it.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Listed below are details of the additional funding being provided this year as well as that previously announced, and the major measures already taken and planned to control the spread of the disease.

- * Funding
- * health education
- * screening of blood donations
- * other blood testing
- * heat treatment of blood products
- * counselling
- * research
- * information for health professionals
- * co-operation with the voluntary sector
- * setting up of an advisory group of experts
- * confidentiality

/Funding...

Funding

The Government has so far contributed nearly £1 million directly towards the fight against AIDS in addition to resources already committed by Health Authorities. Besides funding various research projects the Government has contributed:

| | |
|----------|--|
| £50,000 | for the training programme for counsellors |
| £58,000 | for evaluating screening tests at PHLS |
| £80,000 | for evaluating screening tests in the NBTS |
| £750,000 | for testing blood samples at PHLS |
| £25,000 | for the Terrence Higgins Trust |
| £15,000 | for the Haemophilia Society |
| <hr/> | |
| £978,000 | |
| <hr/> | |

Additional funding announced today for this financial year will be:

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|--------------------------------|-----------|--|
| NE Thames RHA | £275,000) | for upgrading outpatient facilities, for counselling and for inpatient and out-patient treatment |
| NW Thames RHA | £275,000) | |
| SE Thames RHA | £130,000) | |
| Haemophiliac Reference Centres | £90,000 | for counselling |
| Terrence Higgins Trust | £10,000 | for development of a counselling package |
| Haemophilia Society | £20,000 | for advice work |
| | £12,000 | for national conference on AIDS for health professionals |
| | <hr/> | |
| | £912,000 | |
| | <hr/> | |

/Health Education....

Health Education

The main at-risk groups are homosexual and bisexual men; intravenous drugs abusers; haemophiliacs who have received contaminated blood products; and the sexual contacts of people in these groups. Information leaflets have been produced by the Health Education Council, the Haemophilia Society and the Terrence Higgins Trust. A leaflet warning those in the at-risk groups not to give blood has also been produced for the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS).

Screening of Blood Donations

The risk of contracting AIDS from a blood transfusion is already extremely small, but the planned introduction of a screening test within the NBTS will reduce this risk still further. All the commercially available screening tests have been evaluated by the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) and two kits are now being tested in the NBTS. Routine screening of all blood donations should be introduced by mid-October.

Other Blood Testing

Health authorities are also making arrangements for blood samples to be taken in sexually transmitted disease clinics so that people who are worried that they may have been exposed to the virus can have their blood tested to discover whether they are antibody positive.

/Heat...

Heat Treatment of Blood Products

All Factor VIII - a blood-clotting agent needed by haemophiliacs - is now being heat-treated. The major re-development, costing £38 million, of the Blood Products Laboratory in Elstree will come on stream at the beginning of 1986 with the capacity for achieving self-sufficiency in blood products by the end of that year.

Counselling

Anyone whose blood is found to contain antibodies to the AIDS virus will be offered counselling, which will also extend to families and friends. A counselling training course has been developed at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and over 180 people will be trained by the time the blood test becomes available in October.

Research

The Government-funded Medical Research Council is co-ordinating a number of important research projects costing nearly £400,000. The MRC also maintains valuable links with researchers working in the United States and elsewhere.

Information for Health Professionals

Special guidance has been produced for groups of health professionals who are involved in caring for AIDS patients. This has included:

- general information for doctors on the diagnosis of the disease and infection control measures
- information for nurses on the care of patients living in the community
- guidelines of safety measures for health workers and those working in the emergency services.

/Co-operation...

Co-operation with the Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector has a major role to play in offering advice, support and counselling. The Government has already given £25,000 to the Terrence Higgins Trust to support its work on AIDS and £15,000 to the Haemophilia Society in addition to the sums announced today.

Expert Advisory Group on AIDS

The introduction of all these measures in such a short time has been made possible by the setting up of an advisory group of experts on AIDS (EAGA). Sub-groups of EAGA work on various topics such as counselling and blood testing and give advice on the policies to adopt.

Monitoring

The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC), which is part of the PHLS, began national surveillance of AIDS in 1982. They have close contacts with similar centres in other countries including the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States and the WHO AIDS Collaborating Centre for Europe in Paris.

Confidentiality

A letter has been sent to all health authorities reminding them that anyone who goes for a blood test at a sexually transmitted disease clinic must be treated under terms of strict confidentiality. AIDS patients, those found to be antibody positive and any who are treated at STD clinics are protected by the NHS (Venereal Diseases) Regulations 1974.