U.K. Government Is Reviewing Blood Contamination Compensation

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An award-winning composer who contracted HIV and hepatitis C from contaminated National Health Service (NHS) blood products has won a legal challenge against the British government over compensation payments for those who have contracted blood-borne illnesses via NHS treatment, The Times Online reports.

Andrew March, 36, who is living with hemophilia, sought a judicial review to counter the U.K. health secretary's May 2009 decision to not fully compensate Britons who contracted illnesses through contaminated blood. An independent inquiry had recommended that these Britons receive compensation on the same level as the victims of a recent blood contamination scandal in Ireland. In that case, people received an average of £750,000 ($1.1 million) if they contracted hepatitis C and up to £101,000 ($154,939) if they contracted HIV.

The aforementioned 2009 inquiry by Lord Archer of Sandwell found that 4,670 hemophiliacs who received blood transfusions in the 1970s and 1980s contracted hepatitis C. Of that number, 1,243 were also infected with HIV. The so-called Archer Report recommended that victims be compensated on the same level as in Ireland, but the government refused to pay those amounts because, it argued, Ireland's federal blood transfusion service was found to be at fault, which was not the case in Britain.

The High Court judge's ruling states that the government's approach "has been, and remains, infected by error" and that the department of health has to reconsider compensation paid to victims.

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