

Victim of AIDS — because a blood donor was infected

The scandal of



How The Mail on Sunday broke the story on May 1

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's death

GRO-A

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GRO-A was only 58 when he died last week.

He was a happily married grandfather with five children, the popular secretary of the cricket club in the Bristol suburb of GRO-A.

Mr GRO-A's death certificate will say that he died of renal failure at Bristol Royal Infirmary. Because of that there will be no need for an inquest, according to the city's Coroner's Office.

Yet everyone who knows about Mr GRO-A, his doctors as well as the Government's watchdog committee, the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, knows that the real cause of his death was that he was given blood infected by AIDS — the incurable disease which has swept through the homosexual community in America.

Technical

Mr GRO-A was not a homosexual.

But since birth he had suffered from haemophilia, the blood disorder whose victims can bleed to death from a small cut if they do not get treatment with a clotting agent.

By a tragic accident, the agent he was given had been contaminated by the AIDS-infected blood of an American donor. GRO-A

Why there must be action

THE suppression of the facts of GRO-A's tragic death and the lack of an inquest point towards a conspiracy of silence.

It may be that in withholding information, Mr GRO-A's family, the Haemophilia Society and the doctors who treated him were all acting with the most honourable of intentions.

All have stressed the need to avoid panic

among Britain's 4,500 haemophiliacs. However, they are mistaken.

Only by revealing all the details of this scandalous and unnecessary death can we protect other individuals from a similar fate. Only public pressure can stop other haemophiliacs from dying.

In May, I pointed out the dangers of importing blood from a country with an AIDS epi-

demic. And I was viciously attacked for panic-mongering. Must another innocent man die before action is taken?

However, while Britain continues to accept American blood supplies, our advice to all haemophiliacs is:

Continue to take your Factor VIII treatment. The risk of bleeding without treatment is infinitely greater than the

risk from AIDS. Last year seven haemophiliacs died through bleeding without treatment.

This year one man has died from AIDS.

But once you've taken your Factor VIII urge your family and friends to write to your MP.

Whitehall will continue to do little or nothing until it knows that the public's anger has been aroused.

GRO-A became the first non-homosexual in Britain to die because of AIDS — Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

It is an illness which destroys the body's capacity to counter even the simplest ailment. So it is technically correct to say that Mr GRO-A died of renal failure.

But that is like saying a bullet kills a man, not the person who pulls the trigger.

The problem, tragically personified by Mr GRO-A's death, is that Britain's 4,500 haemophiliacs need a special blood coagulatory agent, Factor VIII, to prevent them from bleeding to death. Factor VIII is produced by the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree, Hertfordshire. But as much as 70 per cent of the essential ingredients

for the agent are imported from the U.S.

And GRO-A was given Factor VIII contaminated by the blood of an AIDS-infected donor.

He had been treated with Factor VIII with no adverse effect on numerous occasions since it was introduced to Britain ten years ago.

Worried

His widow GRO-A said yesterday that she feared her husband might be suffering from AIDS before he died.

'It's always at the back of your mind because you know there's no cure.'

She added she did not want to say any more: 'As a family we

decided on a policy of no publicity and we're sticking to that.'

It was The Mail on Sunday which first warned of the danger of the imported poisoned blood on May 1.

But yesterday GRO-A chairman of the Bristol branch of the Haemophilia Society, attacked 'sensational Press reports' about the crisis.

He said that since news of the death of a haemophiliac from AIDS, he had been overwhelmed by cries for help from sufferers.

'Any single male haemophiliac between the ages of 16 and 60 is worried that he is likely to suffer a homosexual stigma.'

'Mothers with haemophiliac babies and children are terrified to use Factor VIII now and the hospitals are being inundated

with sufferers returning Factor VIII en masse.

'It's all wrong. The chances of anyone suffering AIDS are so slim it's untrue.'

At the same time Mr GRO-A said he was 'shattered' by Mr GRO-A's death.

'He was a lovely man. Everyone who knew him liked him.'

Although The Mail on Sunday highlighted the problem five months ago, Health Minister Kenneth Clarke was still saying yesterday that there was little that could be done.

Grieving

'We will make every effort to find a risk-free source of blood. If we find such a country we will certainly stop imports from America where AIDS is prevalent.'

But many experts believe that a risk-free source of blood already exists — Switzerland. This has already been offered to Britain by the Swiss Red Cross in Berne but officialdom in Britain has so far turned them down.

In Bristol customers call at the general store which GRO-A owned to pass their condolences to the family.

They, like his grieving widow, wonder how a disease of such awful genesis in the sleazy homosexual casual pick-up world of America's West Coast was allowed to kill thousands of miles away in a Bristol backwater.