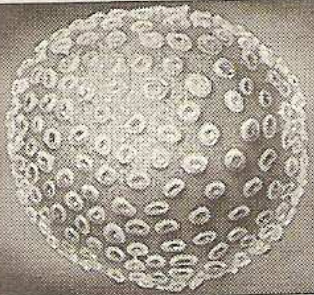


3,000 INFECTED IN NHS SCANDAL

BRITISH PATIENTS GIVEN AIDS BLOOD FROM U.S. JAILS



Deadly . . . the HIV virus

EXCLUSIVE by EMMA
MORTON, Health reporter

BRITISH patients were given blood donated by Aids-ridden American prisoners in a shocking medical blunder, The Sun can reveal.

Blood from Arkansas State Jail was used at Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary, US lawyers have confirmed.

Official figures show at least 3,000 Britons were infected with HIV or Hepatitis C from US blood in the 1970s and 80s.

Of these 1,250 had HIV. And just 384 are still alive.

The Sun has established that a "handful" of these received prisoners' blood. The true figure could be far

higher. Last night there were calls for an inquiry as the Government admitted it **KNEW** prisoners' blood was given to haemophiliacs.

Hospitals used the US blood despite a 1975 World Health Organisation resolution warning against use of blood from paid donors.

The Department of Health said yesterday that it did not know if the warning

was passed on. Three US firms are alleged to have paid donors from high risk groups, including prisoners.

Lawyers have won settlements for 8,000 US haemophilia sufferers (a genetic condition which prevents clotting) after they were given infected blood.

In 2002 the UK Government promised an inquiry if it was proven infected blood

came from a US prison. No inquiry has taken place.

Margaret Unwin of the Haemophilia Society said: "We want a public inquiry, to understand exactly why the tragedy occurred."

Public Health Minister Caroline Flint said: "We are aware that during the 1970s and 80s blood products were sourced from US prisoners.

"Many patients would have

died without blood products. The Government of the day acted in good faith. We do not feel a public inquiry would provide any benefit."

Sun Health Editor Jacqui Thornton writes: Would haemophiliacs have accepted this blood if they knew where it came from? Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt must look at this urgently. The Government **WAS** warned.