

British panel knew of HIV risks in 1983

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Documents show a British government panel knew of the HIV risk from imported blood products as early as 1983.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines ruled against a ban on imported blood at the time because of fears of a supply shortage, The Guardian newspaper said Friday.

The newspaper said 1,757 patients have died and many are terminally ill after receiving the tainted plasma, called Factor VIII, made from blood from paid donors -- many who were inmates or homeless and at a higher risk of Hepatitis C.

A letter from Britain's Public Health Laboratory Service in 1983 warned that 14 hemophiliacs contracted AIDS after receiving Factor VIII concentrate, and that all U.S. blood products made from blood donated in the United States after 1978 should be withdrawn from use.

The newspaper said the British government has always insisted it did not understand the danger of using the blood products.

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