

# Britain boosts funds for hepatitis C-infected patients

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The British government said Monday it was providing up to 130 million pounds in extra funds for people infected with hepatitis C through blood supplied by the state-run health service.

The funds, worth up to 203 million dollars or 156 million euros, will go to patients who develop a serious case of the disease of the liver following their infection in the 1970s and 1980s.

Some 4,675 patients with haemophilia were infected by blood products or transfusions supplied by the National Health Service, and 2,807 of those patients are still alive. A further 1,300 people were infected with [HIV](#).

Under the new funding package, the most serious [hepatitis C](#) sufferers will be given a new annual payment of 12,800 pounds in addition to a lump sum, which will be doubled from 25,000 pounds to 50,000 pounds.

Other measures included in the announcement, which follows a three-month review of compensation payments, include funds for charities to provide counselling and to cover any prescription fees.

"Taken together, these announcements represent a significant rise in the support available to those affected by this tragedy," Health Secretary Andrew Lansley told parliament.

Although he said it was difficult to put a figure on the package, "we

believe these new arrangements could provide from 100 to 130 million pounds worth of additional support" over the next five years.

"I fully recognise that the unintended and tragic consequences of these treatments have seriously impaired the lives of many people, together with those of their families," he said in a separate statement.

The infections occurred before blood products began being heat treated in 1985, and before a test for [hepatitis C](#) was introduced in 1991.

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