

Britain to hold inquiry into contaminated blood scandal

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Britain will launch a new inquiry into a contaminated blood scandal dating back decades which has left 2,400 people dead, officials said Tuesday after pressure from MPs to look into possible criminal activity.

Thousands of people with haemophilia contracted hepatitis C and HIV after receiving transfusions of [blood](#) from the United States through the National Health Service (NHS) in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

"It is a tragedy that has caused immeasurable hardship and pain for all those affected and a full inquiry to establish the truth of what happened is the right course of action to take," Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt had raised the issue at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, saying that "it was necessary to establish the causes of this appalling injustice," the spokesman said.

Because of a shortage of blood products in Britain, the NHS bought much of its stock from US suppliers whose donors, including prisoners and other groups at high risk of infection, had been paid for their blood.

A previous inquiry that concluded in 2009 found that ministers should have acted sooner to try to make British blood supplies self-sufficient so it did not have to rely on imports.

It also called for compensation for those affected.

The government announcement came just before MPs were due to debate the issue in parliament after a request by Labour MP Diana Johnson, who said ministers had failed to consider evidence of criminal activity.

Johnson called the contaminated blood scandal "the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS".

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