

UK opens inquiry into tainted-blood scandal that killed 2400

April 30 2019

A long-awaited inquiry opened Tuesday in Britain into how contaminated blood was used to treat thousands of people in the 1970s and '80s, killing at least 2,400.

Thousands of hospital patients—many of them hemophiliacs—were infected with HIV or Hepatitis C through tainted blood products, largely imported from the United States.

Previous investigations have been branded a whitewash by victims' campaigners. In 2017 Prime Minister Theresa May ordered a new inquiry, with the power to summon witnesses. The inquiry, led by a retired judge, will spend months hearing from victims in London and around the country.

As hearings began Tuesday, May said the blood scandal "was a tragedy that should never have happened."

"Today will begin a journey which will be dedicated to getting to the truth of what happened and in delivering justice to everyone involved," she said.

Victims accuse the government of failing to take responsibility for a scandal that has been called the worst treatment disaster in the history of Britain's public health care system.

The contaminated blood was linked to supplies of a clotting agent called

Factor VIII, which British health services imported from the United States. Some of the products turned out to be infected. Some of the plasma used to make the blood products was traced to high-risk donors, including U.S. prison inmates, who were paid to give blood samples.

"If the government truly wants to do the right thing, they will provide a statement accepting their liability now," said Jason Evans, whose father died in 1993 after receiving tainted blood.

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