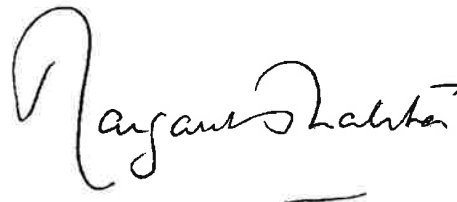


I am sorry if this is a disappointing reply but the Government is showing its great concern for haemophiliacs with HIV, by the ex-gratia payments it is making. The question of compensation has to remain a matter for the Courts to decide.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Raymond Dalton', with a horizontal line underneath.

The Reverend W. Martin Smyth, M.P.

You acknowledge that the thalidomide issue in the 1970s is not an exact precedent. Indeed, there is a fundamental difference: in the thalidomide case the principle of compensation had already been accepted by the Distillers Company, the makers of thalidomide and the scope of the enquiry was limited to determining which of the individual children on the so-called 'Y' list were eligible. In the present case, the Government has not accepted that the infection of haemophiliacs with the AIDS virus - tragic as it is - was the result of negligence; or that we should depart from the view reached by the Pearson Committee when it rejected the arguments for some general scheme of no-fault compensation.

In the meantime, I can assure you that we are doing all we can to help the court action towards an early outcome. If there have been delays from the original timetable that is because of the inherent complexity of the issues and certainly not because of any deliberate attempt on any side to delay things.

I am sorry if this is a disappointing reply.

Yours sincerely

Nargant Dhalta

The Government has given the question of compensation very careful consideration, including the Irish scheme. I have great sympathy but I really do think it is better to spend money provided for health care, from whatever source, on treating patients than on payments to people who received the best possible treatment available at the time. I am convinced that the best way we can provide practical help is to encourage research, and best treatment for those infected, as well as supporting voluntary groups directly concerned with their care. We shall continue to support these efforts and explore other ways in which we can provide help.

I am unable to comment on the possibility of any commercial company accepting liability through funding a settlement and I do not think it would be appropriate for us to explore that.

lottery funds independently of the Government. I cannot direct the Board to fund a particular project. However, you may be interested to know that the Board is encouraging applications from charities working in the fields of health, disability and care in its current funding round. It is, therefore, possible that haemophiliacs and those suffering from Hepatitis C might be able to benefit from lottery grants, but this would be a matter for the Board to decide in response to any applications received.

Yours truly,
John

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