



CJD blood filter call for under-13s

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Children under 13 undergoing a blood transfusion should be given specially filtered blood to cut the risk of fatal new variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (CJD), say government scientists.

The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) has been looking at a new type of filter which removes CJD agents - called prions - from donated blood.

There is still real uncertainty over how many people are infected with CJD.

One estimate claims it is between one in 4,000 and one in 20,000.

But there have only been five known cases of transmission of CJD through contaminated blood and blood products.

'Somewhat perplexed'

The recommendation, which is being considered by the Department of Health (DoH), only applies to children because they were not exposed to contaminated meat.

That follows the decision in January 1996 to remove tissue from beef, such as the spinal chord, which may have carried the agent that causes CJD.

Derek Kenny from Portsmouth died of new variant CJD six years ago after being given a contaminated blood transfusion.

His widow Judy said: "The idea of a filtration system is excellent.

"If it was proven to be effective then we ought to use it because that way we can be sure that the blood pool is safe and that everybody is receiving safe blood."

The scheme will cost the NHS about £70m a year.

The company ProMetic, which makes the filter, says filtered blood should be offered to everyone, irrespective of their age.

Managing director Dr Steve Burton said: "We are somewhat perplexed that this recommendation is being made for children because CJD is an issue for everybody who might receive a blood transfusion."

The committee will continue to evaluate the device, which is still part of a clinical trial.

A DoH spokesman said: "The SaBTO recommendations are just recommendations at present and they

are subject to satisfactory completion of existing clinical studies.

"Their advice is being considered by the Department of Health."

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