

infected their partners.

But what makes the saga so shameful is not just the short cuts, greed and incompetence that led to so many deaths. It's the cover-ups, the obfuscation and the heartlessness of successive governments that refused to admit to their failings and rejected pleas for help from suffering families.

**T**HE combination of avarice, foolishness and poor regulation has echoes of the banking crisis. Both started in the poorest parts of the U.S. and left a trail of destruction worldwide.

And last week, there was one more betrayal. In opposition, both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats condemned the failure to deliver justice to the hundreds still afflicted by the contaminated blood scandal.

But now in government, the Coalition has revealed little more compassion than its predecessors. Forced to respond to backbench pressure, ministers said compensation offered elsewhere was too costly to give to British people given the public spending crisis. It took nearly two decades for the horror of Colvin's story to emerge. The blood that killed him was discovered to have come from prisoners in Arkansas in the U.S. You would be hard-pressed to find

many higher-risk blood donors. Under the governorship of Bill Clinton, who now tours the world promoting Aids prevention, the state prisons developed a multi-million dollar industry selling prisoners' blood. The inmates were paid a small amount to give blood twice a week — like 'little cows', said one Clinton aide later.

This was not the only 'bad blood'. One Canadian company was found to have extracted blood from Russian corpses, then re-labelled it as coming from donors in Sweden. The company also bought blood from Haitian slums and reportedly re-packaged out-of-date blood for sale in Europe.

The result of this is that thousands of haemophiliacs in countries such as Britain, Canada, France, Ireland, Italy and Japan were infected with deadly viruses in the Seventies and Eighties. Haemophilia, a rare inherited disorder which means blood does not clot properly, usually to recurrent bleeding, usually into the joints, which may occur spontaneously or after injury.

To prevent this, sufferers rely on injections of anti-coagulants made from blood plasma. Tragically, the product that helped give them a normal life led to their slaughter. Imagine the outcry if the numbers affected by

various blood-borne viruses were one-off disaster. But, instead, these people have slipped away quietly one by one over the years, forgotten victims of a silent and avoidable holocaust. In Britain, taking blood from paid donors is deemed unsafe since it tends to attract the desperate in society.

In the U.S., however, trade in prison blood was permitted until 1984. Then it was banned internally, but exports were allowed to continue. Incredibly, the British authorities continued to buy it, having delayed a drive towards self-sufficiency in blood products.

Government papers leaked this year found that even as the resulting infections spread, officials displayed astonishing heartlessness.

## EAT MORE...

**ADD chichory to salads and stir-frys to boost stomach health. It contains inulin, a carbohydrate which encourages the growth of good gut bacteria.**



## RUDE HEALTH



**LOSING your sex drive in the winter is normal, a study at the University of Tasmania found. Blame your ancestors. 'With dwindling food supplies — and sex using precious energy — the drop in libido evolved to help conserve what little energy we had left to get through the cold months,' say the researchers.**

said: 'Of course, the maintenance of the life of a haemophiliac is itself expensive, and I am very much afraid that those who are already doomed will generate savings which more than cover the cost of testing blood donations.' Vaccines that could have prevented deaths were ruled too expensive. No doubt such views explain why the results of an internal inquiry have never been published. Perhaps they also explain why, four years ago, Caroline Flint, then Public Health Minister, announced that key documents had been destroyed 'in error' by a junior member of staff.

**E**VEN when a privately-funded public inquiry was set up, the Government withheld vital papers — allegedly on confidentiality grounds — then refused to give evidence.

The report of the two-year inquiry, released in February last year, condemned the 'horrific human tragedy'. It concluded Britain was slow to react to the problems as they emerged and said commercial interests were put ahead of safety.

But demands for all victims to be given decent compensation were brushed aside. There was

for those with HIV, but nothing for those with hepatitis C beyond the promise of a review in five years time — by which time many more will have died in penny.

There's also still no money for the widows of those who died before 2003 from hepatitis C.

In Ireland, those infected with hepatitis C were awarded an average of £750,000 each after a public inquiry in 1991. But last week, ministers ruled out similar compensation, saying it would cost more than £3 billion. The best they offered was a rapid, but limited, review into the cases of those infected with hepatitis C.

As someone with a related, although less severe, blood disorder, I spent my childhood in the haematology departments of hospitals.

Many of those children in beds beside me will now be dead, victims of this wretched chapter of greed. In France and Japan, people have been sent to jail for their role in the scandal. In Canada, the Red Cross was prosecuted for negligence.

In Britain, this scandal has dragged on too long. There have been too many deaths, too much pain, too much grief and too many betrayals.

The Government must admit its failures and accept that it let down people in the most tragic way possible — if only to bring some peace at last to Colvin's family and thousands more like them.

## HOW TO... TREAT A STYE



**STYES occur when an eyelash, follicle or glands in the eyelid become blocked and infected.**

**Opometrist SIRIIT SANGHERA, of Speasners, explains how to deal with the problem.**

**■ APPLY a warm compress.** This warms the fluids causing the blockage, helping them drain away. Soak a flannel in hot water and put on the eye for five minutes. Repeat four times a day. You can

also apply a teabag, soaked in warm water, for around ten minutes — the tannins in tea act as an anti-bacterial agent.

**■ REMOVE discharge using a cotton bud soaked in diluted baby shampoo.**

**■ ANTI-BIOTIC eye ointment containing chloramphenicol will help kill the bacteria causing the infection. You can buy it over the counter from your chemist.**

**LUCY ELKINS**

## WE TEST THE HEALTH TESTS OVARIAN CANCER

**Ovplex™ Test**  
£275 from ovplex.co.uk.

**HOW IT WORKS:** The test measures levels of five proteins in the blood, which are present only when ovarian cancer exists.

You order and pay for the test from the website. The next day, you will receive by post an Ovplex™ Test Wallet.

This will be accompanied by a list of Spire Healthcare hospitals in the UK where the blood test can be performed — no appointment required. A

laboratory processes your sample and the result is sent to your consultant, doctor or GP within seven to ten days. They will then discuss the result with you.

**THE EXPERT SAYS:** 'This test may be able to detect ovarian cancer — but I have not been able to find any published scientific evidence for it,' says Stephen Duffy, professor of cancer screening at Queen Mary, University of London and Cancer Research.