# Women infected with hepatitis C from contaminated blood face ongoing medical neglect in the UK



A report has highlighted the challenges faced by women in the UK who were infected with hepatitis C due to contaminated blood transfusions during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. Many of these women, speaking to the Guardian, expressed frustration over the long-standing difficulty in getting their medical concerns taken seriously by healthcare providers. They reported that their symptoms were often dismissed as related to weight, motherhood, menopause, or teenage mood swings.

One of the affected, Janice Whitehorn, was infected as a baby in 1973 after her mother received a contaminated transfusion. She experienced chronic fatigue and other health issues during her childhood and teenage years, which were frequently dismissed by doctors. It wasn't until her 30s, while trying to start a family, that she was finally tested and diagnosed with hepatitis C.

Similarly, another woman, Joy, 64, from Somerset, repeatedly visited her GP from her mid-20s, suffering from unusual tiredness and food sensitivities, without ever being tested for hepatitis C. It was only after donating blood in 2007 that she was informed of her exposure to the virus.

Jenny Cooper, 65, from Kent, shared a comparable experience of enduring unexplained health problems for decades following a transfusion received during an operation in 1987. She was only screened and diagnosed in 2019.

These cases are part of a broader inquiry into the infected blood scandal, which seeks justice and compensation for the over 30,000 people affected. The public inquiry is set to publish its final report on May 20, 2024. Throughout their ordeals, many victims felt neglected by a healthcare system that was slow to recognize and address the spread of hepatitis C, a virus often associated with significant stigma related to assumptions about lifestyle.