What Is AIDS?

AIDS is an acronym derived from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS itself does not kill. But, as its name implies, the victim is left with a crippled immune system. Lacking this protection, a person with the disease will usually die from an infection, such as a unique type of pneumonia or a rare form of skin cancer, Kaposi’s sarcoma. Research into detection and diagnosis is in its early stages, and there is, as yet, no known cure for AIDS.

not widely publicized in Britain. The inference was that donated blood gives no cause for alarm. But two shocking factors have combined, causing The Daily Telegraph to conclude: “Britain has lost the battle to prevent the AIDS virus infiltrating blood supplies.”

The first shock came when press reports revealed that for many years Britain has in fact been buying blood from abroad. “Blood is being bought from people in poor countries where there is a high increase of blood-transmitted diseases,” confided a union representative at a blood-products laboratory. Furthermore, some 70 million units of concentrated Factor VIII are imported from the United States and are used to treat British haemophiliacs. Each batch of Factor VIII is made from plasma that is pooled from as many as 2,500 blood donors. It seems that by importing this blood product the AIDS virus was transferred to the British supply.

An additional shock came when AIDS was confirmed as having infected the system from homosexual donors within the British Isles. Although homosexuals have been among those asked not to donate blood because of their higher risk of having AIDS, the warning was not as strongly worded as it should have been, admitted the Department of Health. The warning in their pamphlet on AIDS referred only to “Homosexual men who have many different partners.” A current reprint of the leaflet A.I.D.S. and how it concerns blood donors specifies that “Practising male homosexuals and bisexuals” are “particularly susceptible” to AIDS. But the warning came too late. By the beginning of 1985 more than 40 individuals, including a newborn baby, were infected. Furthermore, there is the troubling fact that the AIDS virus has an incubation period of up to two years. So many more have already been infected? There is a “time-bomb element,” as The Sunday Times put it. Accordingly, the National Blood Transfusion Service has recently prepared an additional pamphlet for all potential blood donors in Britain, Some Reasons Why You Should Not Give Blood.

There have already been some 50 deaths from AIDS in Britain, out of over 100 reported cases. The number of people suffering from the disease is presently doubling every eight months. A medical correspondent for The Sunday Times estimated that there could be over 12,000 cases within five years. An even more startling estimate out of the United Kingdom’s Royal College of Nursing is that one million people in the British Isles could be affected by the year 1991 if no action is taken to check the spread of AIDS.

The inquirer mentioned above said: “It seems to me that you Jehovah’s Witnesses are being proved right on this matter of blood transfusion.” More accurately, of course, it is Jehovah God, through his Word, the Bible, who is being vindicated. Centuries ago he commanded Christians to ‘abstain from blood.’ (Acts 15:29; 21:25) His counsel and standards have certainly proved to be a protection for his people and will continue to be.