Blood clotting agent blamed as 2 die of Aids and 2 more cases reported

By Andrew Velitch, Medical Correspondent

Two more Aids cases have been confirmed in Britain, and two more patients have died. The new cases — bringing the total to 20 — are reported in the Lancet today by Dr Spencer Gallbraith, director of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, in London. The Department of Health reported the deaths, which brings the total to 12.

The victims include two haemophiliacs, one of whom died, who are thought to have contracted the disease from contaminated supplies of Factor VIII, the blood clotting agent imported from US.

The risk of haemophilia being developing the disease are put into perspective today by Dr Peter Jones, director of the Newcastle upon Tyne haemophilia centre. He calculates, in a leading article in the British Medical Journal, that the incidence of Aids among haemophiliacs here and in the US is about 0.8 per thousands.

Dr Jones adds, however, that since no Factor VIII can be guaranteed Aids-free, alternatives should be used to treat very young, severely-affected children, and elderly people with mild forms of haemophilia.

Fears among British specialists that Aids arrived from the US two years ago and may reach epidemic proportions next year, are born out today by a report from doctors at West Germany's federal Aids working group headquarters in Berlin. So far 44 cases have been registered and 14 have died, they write in the Lancet. Clusters of cases have been identified in Munich, Frankurt and Berlin.

They warn: "These data indicate . . . that the epidemic is now spreading within the German homosexual community and may increase exponentially. The incubation period of Aids infection suggests that the increase will parallel that observed in 1981-82 in the US, but with a time lag of 14-2 years."

Aids — acquired immune deficiency syndrome — destroys the body's defences against infection: 2,750 cases have been confirmed in the US, and 1,298 people have died.