

Witness Name: Brendan Brown

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INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN4496020

"HIV is a chronic manageable disease"

Although there is no current cure, the advancements of antiretroviral medications available for those infected with HIV enable most people with the virus to live a long and healthy life. Due to this, HIV is considered to be a chronic manageable condition.

This statement is broadly true and behind it is an encouraging and optimistic message: the life expectancy, health and quality of life of people living with HIV has improved markedly over the last 3 decades and the risk of HIV-related illness has sharply declined in higher income countries. The current life expectancy for someone with HIV is comparable to that of the general population in the UK. The increase in both longevity and overall health is mainly due to the development of antiretroviral drugs (ART) capable of suppressing HIV viral replication resulting in preservation of the immune system.

However, life expectancy in people living with HIV (PLWHIV) is affected by number of factors, including access to effective HIV treatment and medical care, early diagnosis and onset of ART, absence of prior HIV-related illness, and response to treatment.

This may leave a substantial HIV-positive population who cannot derive the same benefit from ART; for example, some PLWHIV cannot tolerate ART due to side effects (although improvements in drug development and a larger choice of ART have reduced this) and these individuals face declining health and a lower life expectancy. In addition, in common with other chronic illness such as hypertension and diabetes, remaining well is dependent on taking medication every day but unlike some other chronic illnesses, missing only a few doses can result in the risk of developing resistance to ART which could ultimately render it ineffective.

Living with a chronic illness may also produce additional stresses and reduced wellness and well-being and infection with HIV remains stigmatised.

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Dr. Catherine C. Smith 28-07-2021

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