

Witness Name: Shaun Donnelly

Statement No:WITN2650001

Dated: 26th August 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SHAUN DONNELLY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Shaun Donnelly, will say as follows:-

1.Introduction

1. My name is Shaun Donnelly. My date of birth is GRO-C 1968 and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am married with an 18 year old daughter who is currently at college. My current occupation is with the Town of Redding Council and I am the Building Official that deals with legal permits and inspections of properties.

3. This statement will discuss how my father, Peter Donnelly, who was a haemophiliac, came to be infected with HIV and subsequently passed away due to receiving contaminated blood products.

2.How Infected

1. The hospital where Dad became infected was the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, about an hour from GRO-C Dad was always back and forth to the hospital and it was the mid-eighties when he learned of being infected with HIV.
2. I know Dad was emotionally affected and I have seen a letter regarding the day Dad was told about the HIV. The letter is clear talking about Dad's emotional response in being told about being HIV positive from the Department of Haematology and it was dated 6th August 1985. Dad was tested on 7th April 1985 and was greatly distressed in receiving HTL V-3 at the time. Now that I'm older I better understand that he was massively emotionally messed up.
3. In regards to how Dad became infected, he was told it was from the Factor VIII infusions. I cannot recall if he was given any guidance or advice in regards to the treatments but I'm sure he would have had some. I remember that Mum and Dad were not silent about it when talking between themselves; however I did not get told a whole lot about the matter. I think he kept it a secret due to the stigma and the fear of what people may think and being an outcast from the community,

3.Other infections

1. Other than the known infections he had. I don't think that Dad was aware of any others and even in the medical records it appears he is unaware of anything else.

4.Consent

1. I'm sure Dad would have been given some guidance and advice on the HIV but I am unable to say this for definite.

5.Impact

1. My recollections are somewhat vague to when my brothers and I were told that Dad had HIV. I remember Mum sitting me down and talking to me about it. I cannot recall my overall reaction at the time but I do remember feeling numb. Mum did all the talking and Dad said nothing. Before Dad was infected and we found out we all had a normal everyday family relationship with the usual ups and downs but normal. Dad was a private person he was more level than most in terms of how he handled emotions but after he came to learn of his infection he was distant and contact with the outside world was minimal. He stayed in watching TV and sent Mum out to do most of the errands. Whereas before this he was sociable and used to go out to meet friends for drinks down the local pub, and was very hands on around the house, always fixing things and was a very active person.
2. I kept silent about the whole thing due to the stigma on it and even now I'm still reluctant to talk about it. All these years later it still affects me, for example, I was recently having a conversation with a colleague in work about losing a parent at 50 as my Dad was this age when he passed. I mentioned to the colleague about Dad passing at 50 as this is the age I am now, however, I could not bring myself to say that it was HIV related. The impact is clearly still being felt all these years later and not likely to change for that matter.
3. During a lot of Dad's illness I was in University and college but was back and forth home to see Dad. I was home between 1987 and 1988 and working and doing some extra A-levels. I then went back to University as I had picked the wrong course and I'm sure Dad being infected caused an impact on my studies.

6.Treatment/Care Support

1. I do not remember Dad having any treatment for the HIV. I know that Dad was getting treatment for his haemophilia which he was born with. I know that Dad had physical problems with his knees and joints due to the haemophilia. I remember after a car crash that Dad got treatment through interactions with doctors. Interactions then became prevalent, he was added to the list of known haemophiliacs, and was given treatment for this then.
2. I believe that Dad was aware of the treatment and that he consented fully and had knowledge of his treatment. Mum was trained to administer Factor VIII to Dad at home. In relation to receiving treatment I'm not aware of Dad having any problems in receiving treatment. I do recall that there was an impact on Mum but she was strong woman and was the main breadwinner as a result of Dad being unable to work. She would come home make the dinner and look after the home and look after the children, although she did not have much of a social life as a result. The impact on my mother after my Dad's death was extreme because she blamed herself for infecting Dad using the home infusions. With her constant guilt, she became reliant on alcohol and suffered with this affliction for several years until it eventually caused her passing.
3. There were no obstacles in getting treatment, especially when Dad was known to the haemophilia department; there was constant stream of treatment. There was regular communication with Dr Elisabeth Mayne at Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast and she was good for the community in that respect. I remember that Dad used to talk to others infected in the Department and found this to be an indirect support to him. Mum also became very active and did fundraising for the Haemophilia Society. I don't know how she found the time to do this but this gives testament to her strength throughout the ordeal.

7.Financial Assistance

1. In relation to financial assistance, I only recall that Dad got money from something at some point that was put away for my younger brother. I'm not sure about where the money came from, maybe a Trust, there are different opinions within the family on where the money came from. I only recall that the little bit of money was put away for my younger brother but I never saw a signed agreement from the Government at the time

8.Other Issues

1. I am happy for this information to be disclosed to the Inquiry now that it is all out in the open and I don't feel the need to hide away.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

GRO-C

Dated... AUGUST 26TH 2019