

Witness Name: Leslie John Buse

Statement No. WITN3727001

Dated: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LESLIE JOHN BUSE**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Leslie John Buse will say as follows:-

#### **1. Introduction**

1. My name is Leslie John Buse, my date of birth is GRO-C 1945 and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I have been married to my wife Elinor for 47 years and we have two children and two grandchildren. I also have a step-sister.

#### **2. How Affected**

1. My mother Hilda Grace Buse was born on the GRO-C 1909 and sadly passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1980. She was infected with the Australian antigen positive virus and hepatitis C.
2. My mother worked all of her life and for the last 16 years of her working life she worked at Valet Service on Whitchurch Road in Cardiff. She was always very fit and well.
3. My father developed cancer in 1968 and she looked after him and nursed him through two major operations all whilst looking after me at the same time.
4. My father died in 1971 and within eight months my mother suffered a stroke. She was admitted to the University Hospital of Wales, Heath Park, Cardiff (UHW) then came to live with my wife and I so that we could look after her. Fortunately she recovered from the stroke and from 1973 she was reasonably fit and healthy again but continued to live with my wife and I as she sold her house following the stroke.
5. In 1975 she was admitted to the UHW for a gallbladder operation. The doctors also decided to remove her spleen during this operation as it was noted that she had gallstones pressing on her spleen causing the spleen to perish. It was during this operation that she received blood transfusions. I am unsure whether she just received blood or blood products or both. She did not make a good recovery from this operation. It was at this time that I believe she was infected with hepatitis B and I suspect hepatitis C as a result of the transfusions.
6. On arriving at the ward to see my mother after the operation, I was asked to "gown up" to see her. Which I did on that occasion because I was taken aback by it but then on future visits I refused. I did not want my mother to see me in that way I knew it would frighten and worry her and it didn't do me any good either. It would have been at this time that it was mentioned to me that my mother was infected with

Australian antigen positive. It was only mentioned in passing to me in a very matter of fact way by one of the nurses nursing my mother. I think she assumed that I already knew but I had no knowledge of this and I believe that my mother was not aware of this either.

7. After her stay in hospital no further information was given to us about her infection or how to manage it. There was never a conversation with the Consultant. We were totally ignorant of what the infection was. It was only because my wife Elinor was a Sister that we were able to get any information but even that was very limited.

### **3. Other Infections**

1. In 1977 my mother suffered with gangrene in her toes as a result of diabetes and poor circulation and had to undergo a below the knee amputation at the UHW. A few weeks later after being transferred to Glan Ely Hospital in Cardiff to recuperate she fell out of bed within 48 hours of arriving and re-opened the stump. Subsequently, she had to undergo a further operation to amputate the whole leg. She tried using a prosthetic leg but this was not very successful and ended up wheelchair bound instead.
2. At the beginning of 1979 my mother had to have a further operation to completely remove her other leg because that had also become infected with gangrene. She became completely wheelchair bound. It is of course possible she could have been transfused with infected blood again as she would have had additional transfusions during these operations.
3. Around February 1980 the illness started to affect my mother's brain. She became confused. At that time, she was admitted to St. David's Hospital in Cardiff with a chest infection. They did not look after her very well, she suffered terrible pressure sores. On the day she died, I and my wife were in an adjoining room to where my mother was. The

nurse went in to clear my mother's chest and when she returned she said "you can go in if you want" quite off hand. My mum was left alone as the nurse went to attend another patient. When we returned to her room, she had unfortunately already passed away. It was sad because she was all alone. We weren't told that my mother was deteriorating that quickly and definitely not that she was so close to death.

#### **4. Consent**

1. I believe that my mother was treated without her knowledge and consent and without being given adequate and full information.

#### **5. Impact**

1. I believe that because we had no knowledge of my mother's infection of hepatitis B and C we thought that her symptoms were a result of her other illnesses. However, since finding out about the prevalence of hepatitis C in blood and blood products in the late 1970's, I suspect that her symptoms were a result of an undetected hepatitis C infection. Unfortunately, as considerable time has passed since my mother died, we have not been able to obtain records to confirm this suspicion. She suffered lot of pain. Her skin was yellow. She was jaundiced and dehydrated. We were ignorant of the symptoms of hepatitis.
2. It is possible that the hepatitis B and C contributed to her other illnesses or were possibly a consequence of her infection but because we were ignorant to the infection we wouldn't have made the link to hepatitis C at that time.
3. I am unable to comment on the treatment, the difficulty in accessing treatment or the availability of such treatments as I do not have this information but again I don't think she had any specific treatment.

4. The impact on myself was that I was very worried about my mother. I was also worried as to whether it was contagious, "could I catch it". Could I pass it on to my family? I did not have answers to these important questions. I was not comfortable with gowning up when I went to visit my mother in hospital. It is quite daunting when you are asked to do this to see your own mother who has brought you up and loved you all these years. To suddenly have to barrier yourself off from them is upsetting for them and for you.
5. I would constantly ask my wife questions. She was a senior Sister so I suppose I expected her to have all the answers. I know I put a lot of pressure and strain on her during that time.
6. When she came home from hospital, we had to arrange for private nurses to attend to her as my wife and I had full time jobs so it was not an option for us to stay at home to look after her. I gave up work in 1979 to look after and nurse my mother as I was not happy with the care given by the nurses to my mother before she died.
7. My mother wasn't the same person after receiving the blood transfusions and the contaminated blood. She was so pale all the time that she looked like a ghost and she was a shadow of her former self. She wasn't the same mother as she was before she became infected.

## **6. Treatment/Care/Support**

1. I am not aware that my mother faced difficulties in obtaining treatment as we were unaware that she was infected until the nurse told me after my mother's spleen operation. I don't believe she was offered any treatment. I believe that my mother was oblivious to the fact that she was infected. Most other people didn't know much about hepatitis at the time so it's not too surprising that she was oblivious.

2. Counselling or psychological support was not offered to either myself or my mother.

## **7. Financial Assistance**

1. Neither my mother, nor I have received any financial assistance from any source and were never advised of any Trusts or Funds. It would have been extremely helpful during the times when my mother required a private nurse whilst we were out at work.
2. Nobody ever mentioned to us attendance allowance or disability allowance. I gave up work as the cost of private nursing care was very expensive and I didn't receive any form of carer's allowance.

## **8. Other Issues**

1. I would like to ask the Inquiry why was this allowed to happen?
2. If there was insufficient blood, then why did they not use platelets?
3. I would be interested in the answers to these questions.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed..

GRO-C

Dated.....10<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019