

10 DEC 2018

Witness Name: Michael Kennelly

Statement No.: WITNW0028/001

Exhibits: WITNW0028/002-003

Dated: 7th Dec 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL KENNELLY

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

I, Michael Kennelly, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

- My name is Michael Kennelly. My date of birth and my address are known to the Inquiry.
- I am married since 1967 and I had six children with my wife, one boy and five girls. We have 13 grandchildren and a number of great-grandchildren. I live with my wife in a council owned property.
- I am retired now, but in the past I worked in telecoms and in the building trade. My last job was with the council working as part of a maintenance team; I really enjoyed it.
- I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV"), which I contracted as a result of being given infected blood through a transfusion during a surgery I underwent in 1964.
- In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the devastating impact it has had on my life and the rest of my family.
- I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement. My wife also assists me, as sometimes my memory is not very good with names and

dates.

Section 2. How Infected

- In 1964 I was working in the building trade and had experienced episodes where I would end up vomiting blood for no apparent reason. I remember it was one particular incident whilst in my lunch break where I vomited so much blood that I had to rush to Coventry Hospital. After having examined me, the doctors were unable to determine what was wrong and they simply sent me home. I continued to vomit blood and the doctor who attended my home decided to send me back again to Coventry Hospital in an ambulance; I was too sick.
- I have no record and I cannot remember the exact date, but I am sure it was around 1964. I was vomiting black blood. I was taken into surgery and given an anaesthetic. They decided to give me blood: I don't know how much blood they gave me. I have in my mind it was around 30 something. Whether this was units or pints I am not sure of it.
- I remember I was given a local anaesthetic and I recall seeing some of what was going on. They put this thing in my stomach, similar in appearance to the bladder you would find inside a football. This piece of apparatus had pipes coming out of it and I think they used it to cool down the bleed and the organs as they also used ice during the operation.
- After the surgery, I stayed in the hospital for five weeks. I felt they had given me little chance of survival as I was given the Last Rights by a priest and my mother was called from Ireland to be at my bedside. I still have the telegram that was sent to her [WITNW0028/002-003]. I also remember a nurse blessing herself in front of me and jokingly referring to me as the "second resurrection".
- The doctors never told me what was wrong with me. When I left the hospital, I had to effectively learn to walk again and to restart my life. I went back to Ireland to recover and I lived with my mother.
- I later returned to the UK and went back to work. Things were OK for a while but I now remember that when I first met my wife she would often tell me I was very white and lacking in colour. I moved to Shropshire in 1966 and I got married the following year.
- Life remained relatively normal in those years, although some further episodes of vomiting and passing blood continued throughout the 1970's. As a result, I was in and out of hospital on numerous occasions. Even at that stage, nobody ever told me why I was still losing so much blood and nobody ever told me that I might have Hepatitis C.
- The last time I went into hospital as a result of the vomiting they put a tube down my throat and this tube had a weight on it to keep it inside my stomach. I know it sounds unbelievable if told nowadays, but this is how

things worked at that time.

- I know that in the 1970's I was given blood plasma as part of the treatment for my vomiting but I don't know when this happened.
- Over the next few years my condition began to deteriorate. My wife had to care for me as I had difficulty in even holding a cup of tea. I was unable to recall my own date of birth and I felt I was going mad. I became very angry. I was taken into Shrewsbury Hospital but they couldn't tell me what was wrong with me. If now I know that I was behaving like that because of the toxins that were going into my brain, at that time I really didn't know what I was doing.
- In 2006, my doctor run some tests and he finally told me that I had Hepatitis C and that I contracted the virus back in 1972. This had been confirmed from a file found amongst my medical records from 1973.
- In the same year the doctors also told me that I had cirrhosis. I had stopped drinking alcohol back in the 1990's so the doctors assumed that the cirrhosis must have been a result of HCV.
- In the following two years I was sent to Birmingham Hospital where my blood was regularly tested. They also run other different tests: one of them which I clearly recall, required me to hold the palms of my hands out in order to see the blood flow to my fingers. I remember that at that stage they also asked me about drug abuse and tattoos. I had never been involved with drugs but I do have tattoos. Physically I was not well, whilst attending Birmingham Hospital, I continued vomiting and passing blood.
- By 2007 I had to give up work. Whilst I enjoyed my work, I was physically unable to continue at that stage; I was 64 years old.
- On 6 January 2008 I was told that I wasn't getting any better and the only way forward was to have a liver transplant. On 18 February 2008 I went into the Old Queen Elizabeth Hospital for an assessment and the consultants told me that I had chronic Viral Hepatitis C, high blood pressure and diabetes. So they decided to put my name on the transplant list.
- On Easter Monday, 24 March 2008, I received a call from the Birmingham Hospital; they found a liver for me and they were ready to do the transplant. I was in hospital for two weeks and one day. I recall the drugs they gave me after the operation resulted in extreme hallucinations. I was unable to recognise my own wife when she visited me in hospital.
- I was discharged on 8 April 2008, having been in the high dependency unit and the critical care unit. Before we left the hospital, both my wife and I had to learn about the various tablets I would have to get used to taking.

These included the anti-rejection drug ~~Tacrolimus~~ TACROLIMUS M.K.

- I remained under the supervision of the hospital but I can say that life went somehow back to normality. Then, in 2016, the doctors told me about a new drug from America and the hospital coordinator and a specialist nurse, suggested I be given this new treatment called Harvoni. It was a daily treatment I had to take for eight weeks. This drug was to treat Hepatitis C and I know that over this eight-week period the count in my blood went down from six million to zero. I am now told now that I am clear of Hepatitis C. Apart from bad dreams I recall few other side effects from caused by this drug.

Section 3. Other Infections

- To the best of my knowledge, I have not contracted any other infections as a result of the infected blood I received whilst being treated for my condition. No one ever asked me or told me the reason for me vomiting and passing blood.

Section 4. Consent

- As far as I remember, prior to 2006 I have not been tested for Hepatitis C. Certainly between 2006 and 2008 my blood was routinely tested.
- I don't know whether my condition and my treatment were subject to any research. I don't recall giving formal consent for my blood to be screened. I believe consent was implicit in me agreeing to the various tests.

Section 5. Impact

- It would be fair to say that Hepatitis C had a profound effect upon my life. Before the doctors finally told me that I had HCV, I had been in and out of hospital on numerous occasions. Nobody to that point had told me anything in light of the fact I had been given the blood transfusion in 1964.
- The unbelievable thing is that no one has ever been able to tell me what was wrong with me. I was never explained why I kept vomiting and passing blood. I recall one episode when my wife was away: I started being sick in bed and, in attempting to get to the bathroom, I had been sick all over the wall, stairs and landing. There was blood everywhere. It was projectile vomiting of blood. It looked like a horror movie.
- These episodes were extremely frightening. Had it not been for the Hepatitis C I would not have ended up with the liver cirrhosis, I would have not been obliged to undergo a liver transplant and now I would not have to take anti-rejection drugs for the rest of my life. All these things had an enormous impact in my life.

- I constantly worry that sooner or later my body may reject the transplanted liver. I suffer from depression and I am on anti-depressants. I still get the scary dreams and I believe that they are another side effect caused by HCV.
- In the years leading up to my liver transplant, my health deteriorated considerably. As I already mentioned above I felt I was going mad. This, of course, had a profound effect upon my family. My wife, who was then working in a care home had to come home every single day and care for me.
- As I said above, I had to give up work when I was 64 years old. I had planned to remain in that job into my 70's. There were other people there aged 75 so it would have doable for me and I have to say, I really enjoyed that job. So, in giving up work a further financial strain affected my family. Hepatitis C took ten years off my working life and because of that our finances got tighter.
- There was a certain stigma associated with Hepatitis C. When I learnt I had this virus I was dubious about telling our children. My wife and I discussed the matter and in the end we did tell them. I was also concerned that people who learnt I had Hepatitis may confuse it with HIV.
- I have been asked whether I have experienced any difficulty with dental care, but as I have dentures I never really went near a dentist.
- Throughout most of my working life I had been used to working outdoors and the difficulties I experienced in regard to depression got worse. I was constantly worried about the bleeding.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

- I did get support in the form of counselling after I had the liver transplant in 2008, although I may now be confusing this with the tests I had before the operation.
- I didn't know what Hepatitis C was. I was told that I had a virus but I didn't know what that virus was, what the infection implied, which treatments were available and which were the risks to infect my family and all the people around me. Nobody explained me anything.
- Even after I underwent the Harvoni treatment I didn't receive any counselling. I remember being told to make a phone call if I had a problem, but that was it.
- Generally, the treatment I have received from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham has been good. I still attend this hospital and my

wife and I look upon it as something of a day out: providing they continue to tell me I am clear of the Hepatitis C, it's a pleasant trip. At present, I am being treated well.

- I am now told that I am anaemic. I am taking some anti-rejection tablets called Tacrolimus, 2mg per day; they give me headaches. I also take tablets for blood pressure.
- I have developed numerous cancer spots on my back, which have resulted in many operations. I am prescribed a cream to burn this cancer out. I believe this may be one of the effects of taking the anti-rejection drug.

TACROLIMUS
M.K.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

- After my transplant in 2008 I found out about Skipton fund. I submitted an application but it was initially rejected. However, following advice from my doctor, I appealed the decision and I finally received two lump sum payments of £20,000 and £25,000.
- I now receive a monthly allowance of £1,500 from EIBSS. I don't receive any dole money but I do get my state pension. As I have to pay my rent each month I am not left with a great deal.

Section 8. Other Issues

- I am not part and I have never been part of any campaigning or litigation group.
- I have been asked what I expect from the Inquiry. I feel that a lot of people have died as a result of the infected blood and blood products received. I consider myself to be one of the lucky ones in that I am still alive. In reality, I am looking for some answers.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

7/Dec/2018