

(1) FAITH ESTER VICTORIA RICHARDSON  
(2) WITN0092001  
(3) n/a  
(4) 21/01/2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF FAITH ESTER VICTORIA RICHARDSON

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I, Faith Ester Victoria Richardson (DOB

will say as follows:

#### Section 1: Introduction

1. I am the above named Witness in this matter. Save for where otherwise stated the facts set out in this witness statement are within my own knowledge.
2. I married Jonathan Michael Richardson on 26/07/2003, I was previously known as Faith Ester Victoria Smith. My parents are Raymond Edward Smith and Linda Susan Smith. I currently work as a Teaching Assistant.

## Section 2: How Affected

3. My Mum, Linda Susan Smith (DOB [GRO-C]1955), was infected with HCV as a result of a blood transfusion in March 1982.
4. It is my understanding that in January 1982 my Mum was admitted to Doncaster Royal Infirmary due to complications whilst pregnant with me. On [GRO-C]1982, after giving birth, she began to haemorrhage and lost a significant amount of blood. She was therefore taken to theatre so that they could try to control the bleeding and whilst in theatre she received a blood transfusion to counteract the blood she had lost whilst haemorrhaging. I believe that she received approximately 6 units of blood.
5. As far as I am aware no information or advice was given to either of my parents before or after the transfusion about any risks of exposure to infection. It is my understanding that my father signed the consent form as my mother was too ill.
6. In June 2003 while I was waiting to graduate and about to get married it is my understanding that my Mum was informed that she was infected with HCV through a letter she received from the National Blood Service after giving blood. I was not aware of it at the time as my Mum had chosen to protect me by not informing me, however, I believe she arrived home to find that she had received a letter which stated that she had tested positive for Hepatitis C [HCV] and that she should call to discuss matters. I believe no other information was given to her on the letter about the infection. I found out about

my Mum's diagnosis 3 days after my graduation, just before my wedding. As a family we spent a lot of time discussing the implication of the illness. On receiving the news I was very distressed and even blamed myself.

7. It is my understanding that my Mum did not receive any further information until she attended her appointment on 10/06/2003. Whilst at this appointment she had to ask several questions in order to find out more information to help her understand and manage the infection.
8. I believe it would have been less traumatic for everyone involved to find out through any other means than a letter. So many questions needed answering but there was no one for her to ask at that moment in time. If someone had come to the house or even telephoned to relay the test results then questions could have been answered immediately and my Mum would have been provided important and necessary information immediately.
9. I have never been spoken to with regards to any potential risks to myself of having been infected. I am aware that my Mum was told that due to me having been born before the transfusion I was not at risk of infection. Any information I have received in understanding risks or the infection itself have been relayed through my Mum or from my own research on the internet.

### **Section 3: Other Infections**

10. I do not believe my Mum has received any infections other than HCV as a result of receiving infected blood.

#### **Section 4: Consent**

11. To my knowledge I am not aware that my Mum has been treated or tested without her knowledge or consent.

#### **Section 5: Impact**

12. I am aware of occasions where my Mum was ill before she had been diagnosed. In particular I can remember a time where she was hospitalised after feeling extremely unwell. Although she stayed in hospital they were unable to reach a diagnosis and they discharged her. I rushed home from University to ensure she was alright and allow my dad to easily visit her in hospital. I recall my Mum suffered other physical effects from being infected but these were limited.

13. However, I believe the mental effects on her of being infected with HCV have been severe. After an incident where she told a close family friend who did not understand and backed away from her, my Mum chose to keep her diagnosis quiet. I believe she felt as though she was losing friends and did not receive the support she needed. She had often been distant and I believe this stems from the heavy burden of being unable to share her thoughts and feelings with family and friends at church.

14. I am unaware of further medical complications resulting from the infection.

15. It is my understanding that immediately after her diagnosis my Mum was unable to be treated for the infection until the correct treatment came along. In September 2009 my Mum began treatment which I believed to be called Interferon. At this time my husband and I were living with my parents and I saw first-hand the daily consequences of this treatment. My Mum was shaky and the colour drained from her. After the first dose of treatment I had to lie her down and kept checking on her all night as she was so poorly I could not sleep due to worry. I was so scared, I thought she was going to die.

16. Following the other doses of treatment my Mum often suffered from **GRO-C** **GRO-C** hair loss and a suppressed appetite. We would try to cook her anything she wanted just to try and get her to eat but by the time it was made she had often gone off the idea. I also remember one incident where she passed out on Christmas day. She was admitted through Accident and Emergency in January 2010 and was taken off treatment due to how ill she had become.

17. My Mum was greatly impacted by the infection and the treatment. She was often upset and cried a lot. She became socially reclusive and did not want to see anyone outside of her immediate family. This affected us as a family especially at times such as Christmas. Although my Mum still carried on going to work this drained her energy and she would not wish to do anything in the evenings due to being too tired.

18. The diagnosis and treatment had a serious impact of family events. Both mine and my brother's weddings were affected and even though she physically attended I do not believe her mind was really present. As other family members were not aware of the situation she had to pretend like everything was normal when in fact it was far from it. This also affected other family events such as my graduation and my pregnancies. My Mum could not get excited about them as it brought back traumatic memories which led to her not wanting to come shopping for baby clothes with me. During one of my pregnancies I had to receive 3 units of blood post-delivery and the trauma of this was immense on both myself and my mother. I was awake and able to give consent but had to ask them several times to check for infection in the blood due to my extreme worry of contracting HCV.

19. The stigma surrounding the disease made the situation more difficult. I could not bring myself to tell my husband before my wedding and so my father, Ray, spoke to him on my behalf. Even telling extended family members and in-laws was difficult as you were not sure how they would take the news. In the end my Mum chose to only tell a limited number of people and never really spoke about it with work colleagues or friends through fear of losing friends. I supported my mum while she told her own brother about HCV. This was very brave of my mum.

20. Although I never took any time off work during my Mum's treatment, I feel there were times when I did not perform as my mind was elsewhere. I would be texting her to check up on her and how hospital appointments had been

and I believe this impacted my productivity at work. In addition I would often help with transport to hospital appointments as my father could not drive. He is also 12 years older than my Mum and the journey from Doncaster to Sheffield using public transport was wearing. I would often ask for work rotas to be changed so that I could attend appointments and help with transport.

## **Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support**

21. I believed my Mum faced serious obstacles whilst trying to receive counselling. To my knowledge she was not offered any counselling in the immediate aftermath of her diagnosis. When she was eventually referred for counselling this was much later on after her diagnosis and she was then put on a waiting list. She finally received a counselling appointment after her treatment had finished. Although during this period the hospital suggested using their in-house counselling service this was a distance from where she lived and therefore she could only attend when attending at hospital appointments.

22. In addition to counselling my Mum was suggested a support group to attend. She was extremely anxious about these group meetings and therefore I attended with her for support. My recollection is that she only attended three of these appointments as again they were some distance from where she lived and she was already exhausted due to treatment and continuing to work.

23. I have never personally been offered any counselling. I attended the support group with my Mum as an aid to her but did not partake in discussions myself. I am not aware of any counselling service available to me in these circumstances.

### **Section 7: Financial Assistance**

24. My Mum has received various monies from The Skipton Fund. I have never, to my knowledge, received any money from any trusts or funds in relation to this matter.

### **Section 8: Other Issues**

25. Even though my Mum is now clear of HCV, it is my belief that the diagnosis and treatment of HCV still affects my Mum now. Every time she receives a letter regarding this matter the memories of it all come flooding back and she can get quite upset. My mum and I will spend many a time on the phone or communicating via text so that I can pick up her low mood. When friends or family members are ill or receiving treatment for other illnesses this can be extremely hard for my Mum to witness as she remembers exactly what she went through and had to overcome.

26. I believe this whole process has been unfairly dragged out. My Mum should have been told immediately and face to face that she was infected. To have



to speak about it over and over again is extremely unfair on her and the rest of our family who continually try to support her through this process.

27. As a whole this has been an extremely traumatic experience for my Mum and has caused a great deal of upset for our whole family.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this statement are true.

Signed: GRO-C

Dated this 21/11/19