

Witness Name: Lynn Foster
Statement No.: WITN0094001
Exhibits: None
Dated: 22 February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LYNN FOSTER

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 26 October 2018.

I, Lynn Foster, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Lynn Foster. My date of birth is GRO-C 1953. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired branch manager at the Royal Bank of Scotland ("RBS") and I have two daughters, Zoe and Zara from a previous marriage. My current partner is Glenn Bowden (W0094). We have been together for over 17 years and he is also giving a statement to this Inquiry.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C. In particular, I will speak about the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatments I have received and the impact it had on my family and me.

3. I have obtained my medical records but I have not referred to them in the making of this statement, as I find them too distressing to look through. Everything I am saying is from my own recollection, as such it is sometimes vague and I am not good with dates or even years. I suffer from 'brain fog' and I tire easily. However, I am aware that Glenn has relied extensively on my medical records in the making of his statement. Therefore, I defer to Glenn's statement (WITN0734001) should there be any discrepancies regarding dates. Glen has also referred to documents that I understand he has exhibited. I would ask that Glenn's statement is regarded alongside mine for an overall picture.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I was first infected with Hepatitis C ("HCV") after I gave birth to my second daughter, Zara in GRO-C 1984 at the Royal Bolton Hospital. I had required a caesarean section on this occasion. After the birth, the doctors said that I was anaemic and required a blood transfusion. I therefore received the blood transfusion on GRO-C 1984, the day after giving birth to my second daughter.
5. I obviously had no idea at the time that I would contract Hepatitis C through receiving this blood transfusion. In fact, the blood transfusion was not identified as the source of my infection until approximately 27 years later, in 2011. I now struggle to remember the exact dates and chronology of events, as things happened over such a long period of time and I experienced hepatic encephalopathy (causing severe confusion and forgetfulness) as a side effect of the HCV treatments.
6. Before I was diagnosed, I had felt that there was something wrong with me for a long time. I have been with Glenn for the last 17 years, but before that I was married and working. In those days when I was still married to my former husband, I started to really notice the tiredness. I could go through a day at work, come home and make a cup of tea. The next thing I would

be aware of was my daughters taking the cup of tea from me because I would have fallen asleep in the armchair. I knew that I was always very tired, but I was not in a happy marriage at the time, so I thought that was the cause of my exhaustion.

7. By the time I met Glenn, my personality was not quite the same as how I had been before. I still tried to be positive and friendly, but it was different. Glenn did not really see the real me at that time, but he loved me for who I was and we started to live together.
8. I kept going to see the doctors during this time. I used to say to Glenn that I thought I was dying. I could feel that there was something wrong with me, but I just did not know what it was. I think this was perhaps around 2007 when I was convinced that there was definitely something wrong with my health.
9. However, the doctors just thought that I was depressed and kept trying to give me antidepressants. I would not take the antidepressants, because I knew depression was not the main cause of my wretchedness.
10. Sometime later, I found a lump in my breast. I went to the doctor for an examination, but when she examined me, she could not find the lump. Nevertheless, the doctor referred me for a scan due to the weight that I had lost. At that time, I had pains in my chest, I was feeling sick and I had lost so much weight that I dropped from a dress size 14/16 to dress size 10/12. I was clearly unwell; you could see it in my face and my legs in particular.
11. After my examination, the doctor asked me to complete a test to establish if I was suffering from depression. I was asked questions such as "do you have pleasure in doing a certain activity; do you feel like harming yourself". I responded that I did not feel like harming myself, but I was so weary that if I went to sleep and never woke up, it would not matter. Upon hearing this, the doctor diagnosed depression and prescribed antidepressants.
12. I was in a bad state immediately after this examination and diagnosis; I felt so fatigued that I could not even manipulate the zip on the hoodie top that

I was wearing. The doctor had to help dress me. I later felt "fobbed off", as the doctor had not really been able to pinpoint what was actually wrong with me. I took the antidepressants, but continued to feel horrible.

13. When I went for the scan that the doctor had arranged for me, I was told that I had gallstones. My gallstones were so large that the consultant wanted to remove my gall bladder. I agreed to have it removed.
14. Immediately after the operation, the Doctor asked me whether I drank. I said yes, because I usually liked to have a drink on Fridays and Saturdays. However, I did not drink a lot of alcohol and I did not drink on weekdays. The consultant then informed me that he had noticed there were nodules on my liver when he removed my gall bladder. He advised me to give up drinking completely. My impression was that he did not believe me about my true alcohol consumption and put the state of my liver down to me drinking more than I should.
15. I was shocked, and I felt like I was being labelled an alcoholic. I did not drink anything like enough alcohol to do that kind of damage to my liver. I have since learned that you need to abuse alcohol for many years to cause nodules on the outside of the liver. The consultant should have realised that the damage to my liver was not due to alcohol abuse and looked further into it. I believe that this was a missed opportunity and the Hepatitis C that I was carrying, could have been diagnosed at that point.
16. A few weeks later, I was seeing my GP for something unrelated. I asked if the consultant had sent a letter about me, but the doctor said no. I told the doctor that that was strange, because the consultant had said something about my liver. The doctor then conducted liver function tests ("LFTs") on me, and said that there was nothing wrong with my liver.
17. After I had my gallbladder taken out, I thought that I would feel better but I did not. I went back to the doctor, and she sent me for a mammogram and biopsy of the lump. She also took blood tests for me and found that I had

become diabetic. At that time, I was skinny and there was no record of diabetes in the family.

18. When the results of my mammogram came back, the doctor told me that I had breast cancer. She wanted me to have a fine needle aspiration to take some blood out of the lump and send it off for analysis. However, when I went to have this biopsy done, I was seen by a different doctor who decided against the fine needle aspiration. Instead, she used a gun to take the sample.
19. After she had done this, she and the nurse almost ran out of the room. They did not even turn the light on in their haste to leave. Shortly after that, I went to have breakfast in Bolton with Glenn and my daughter, and I collapsed in the market.
20. Fortunately, an off-duty nurse happened to be walking past at the time, and was able to help us. I was taken straight back to the hospital. I do not recall too much of what happened afterwards as I was very unwell, but Glenn informs me that I had a massive haematoma, which was caused when the doctor nipped a vein whilst conducting my biopsy that morning.
21. After further tests, I had a lumpectomy and radiotherapy at The Christie hospital in Manchester, to remove the breast cancer. I healed up very well after the surgery, although I do still have a lot of pain with it. My general health, however, did not improve. After my lumpectomy and the treatment, I had thought that I would start to feel better. Unfortunately, I did not feel any improvement. I was in fact feeling worse.
22. I went for a check-up, and everything on the side where I had had my breast cancer looked fine. Regardless, I asked the doctors to check my other side, because it did not look quite right to me. They did as I requested, and took a sample as they agreed that it did not look right.
23. When I went back to see the doctor about the sample, I received more bad news. He told me that he really did not know how this had happened, as the sample they had taken was cancer but not breast cancer. He diagnosed

me with a different type of cancer called Large B-Cell Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.

24. After this diagnosis, the doctor referred me to see Doctor Grey. Dr Grey was wonderful; he knew so much about the different types of cancer. When I went to see Dr Grey, he asked for my permission to test me for particular diseases such as AIDS, HIV and hepatitis. I thought nothing of it, and said, "Yes of course, not a problem". Glenn was with me at the time, and we were laughing initially. Even the nurse who was in the room with us laughed about it.
25. The next day, the hospital called and asked me to go in on my own. So I went in, and the doctor said, "Lynn, I'm so sorry but you have got Hepatitis C". I asked how you get Hepatitis C, and the doctor explained that it was transmitted through blood-to-blood contact, for example by sharing dirty needles perhaps when getting a tattoo. I cannot remember too many other details because I was so shocked by this news. I asked them to bring Glenn in to the room, and Glenn was also gobsmacked when he heard.
26. The medical staff then informed me that they would have to GRO-C GRO-C test Glenn, GRO-C for HCV. I was completely mortified by this. I had to tell my children, who were grown by then and living away and frighten them with this news. GRO-C tests came back negative.
27. Then, the doctor asked me whether I had had blood transfusions. I told them that I did when I had my second child. Dr Grey informed me that the probable cause of my hepatitis C, was infected blood from the transfusion I had been given. He was so nice and honest, and was also clearly quite shocked by my diagnosis. He was then able to look at my maternity records and identify the batch numbers. After this, he gave us all of the information about the Skipton Fund.

Section 3. Other Infections

28. I do not believe that I have received any infection other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood. However, I believe that my infection led to my development of large B-Cell Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma , my cirrhotic liver, gallbladder problems and diabetes.

Section 4. Consent

29. I do not believe that I have been treated or tested without my knowledge.
30. I do not think I was asked to give my consent to the blood transfusion, but I could have been drowsy and forgetful of this point. I would have agreed to it on the doctor's advice. However, if I had known where the blood had come from i.e. how it had been obtained, from dubious sources, of course I would not have consented.

Section 5. Impact

Mental and physical impacts

31. I have suffered horrendous impacts mentally and physically, either as a result of treatments or directly from hepatitis C.
32. When I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, the doctor told me that they would have to treat that before they treated the HCV because it was a very aggressive form of cancer.
33. The side effects of the treatment for Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma were horrendous. I lost my hair, developed sepsis in my legs and incurred damage to my heart due to the chemotherapy. I was always falling asleep, to the extent that on one occasion that I recall, my grandchildren wondered whether I was still alive when they saw me suddenly motionless and asleep on the sun lounger. Instances like that were horrible and at times detracted from having a normal relationship with them.

34. Due to the chemotherapy, the doctor informed me that it was very important for me to drink 4 litres of water per day in order to flush the drugs out of my system – they damage your liver as much as anything else. The impact on my body was that I could not hold that much liquid. This meant that I would go out and have accidents. It was embarrassing. So it got to the point where I was frightened to go out; I sometimes could not even make it to the toilet in time at home. Because of this, I also did not want people to come round to our house. This impacted mine and Glenn's social life, as for a while we didn't have anyone round or go anywhere. Having to drink all that water prevented me from doing stuff, because I was scared to have accidents.
35. It was even worse when I started on the lactulose. I had to take it to ensure that I flushed the toxins out of my system. I was supposed to take the lactulose three times a day, as my liver is no longer functioning well enough to flush the toxins out. But this made me poo my pants in the middle of the shop when I was out with Glenn on one occasion. I was mortified. I wanted to die, but I had no option other than to take the lactulose. Now, if I have something I need to do, then I know not to take lactulose beforehand. It is embarrassing that I have no control over my bowels.
36. I felt like I could not properly recover from the chemotherapy because I had Hepatitis. Shortly after that, the doctors found that my liver was damaged with cirrhosis. I am aware that I had a Fibro-scan, but I was just so poorly by that point, that I do not remember very much.
37. I remember seeing Dr Libby in North Manchester Hospital. The treatment for HCV was 48 weeks of injection and tablets. I had the first treatment and then I went for a follow-up appointment the next week. In the week before I went back, I had been feeling quite poorly and strange. I could not get out of bed the next morning, and my brain did not feel right. The night before the follow-up appointment, I had been using my phone trying to make a call, and I had just kept on tapping the phone. I could not work out how to make a call. This type of thing i.e. trying unsuccessfully to do something absolutely normal and routine, became common. It was so frustrating

knowing what I wanted to do but not being able to translate the thought into the action.

38. My sister was staying with Glenn and myself at that time. I remember becoming increasingly confused. I said I did not want to go to the hospital. My sister wondered what I was doing, because I did not even know how to spray perfume. By the time I got to the hospital, I was even worse. There was something drastically wrong with me. The doctor took one look at me and instantly admitted me to hospital.
39. It was only later that we realised what had happened. The medication the hospital had given me did not go with another medicine they had given me. They had not checked that those drugs should not have been co-administered. I have checked with Glenn, and the name of the drugs I received were Ribavirin, Pegasys and Teleprevir.
40. I was admitted to hospital on the Thursday. My QT intervals were so great that I could have gone into a coma, but then I was discharged too early on the Sunday because the hospital needed empty beds. Glenn was very angry about this and did not want to take me home initially. Glenn insisted that I was tested again. The hospital were able to convince Glenn that my QT intervals had reduced sufficiently, so he reluctantly agreed. On our way out of the hospital, the staff informed us that they had taken me off a drug I had been taking for my heart. I can't recall the name of it.
41. When I went back to see my heart doctor, she could not understand why the hospital had taken me off the tablets. I then went to see another consultant for my liver. He checked the level of alpha-fetoprotein in my blood, and informed me that a new treatment for Hepatitis was being introduced across the country. I initially did not qualify but then due to a worsening of my condition - my liver became decompensated, I qualified for the new treatment. According to my medical records, I was allowed onto the 'SOF' early access programme of Sofosbuvir, Ledipasvir and Ribavirin.

42. I started the new treatment in late 2014. I was informed that the new drugs had been trialled and that the results were good, but they were only gradually being introduced because of the expense. The new treatment was wonderful – I went home with £12,500 worth of tablets in my hand and took my first doses for a week or two. When I went back after only a couple of weeks on the new treatment, the doctors took some of my blood to test. Then when I went back again, I was informed that my virus was nearly gone. I completed the course of treatment, and my viral load was declared to be undetectable on 03 September 2014.
43. As the drugs were still new at the time, the doctors did not know whether the virus could come back. However, I was assured that they would give me this new medicine again if I did relapse.
44. I was very happy to be clear of Hepatitis C. However, I found that the side effects of the treatments were much more long lasting than I had expected. I had expected to feel better straight away, but I did not.
45. I was diabetic, I had cirrhosis, and had developed osteopenia and cataracts. The cataracts progressed much faster than expected, and a different consultant told me that this had probably been caused by steroids from my lymphoma treatment.
46. I believe that the treatments have probably done as much damage as the hepatitis. I still get 'brain fog', fatigue and I am much more susceptible to illnesses than I was previously. Whilst I was having problems with my heart, I was wheelchair-bound for several months. I cannot remember how long, but Glenn thinks it was about 6 months. I was not even able to walk more than a few steps. I also became depressed, even though I had previously refused to accept the fact that I was depressed because I could not understand why I was feeling that way.
47. Further, I now get scared that any little thing that is wrong with me is a sign of something much worse. I live in constant fear of every single ache or

pain that I get. It may not seem rational, but after what I have gone through I cannot help but feel scared.

48. I am still watching my alpha-fetoprotein levels in case they get too high, as they are indicative of liver cancer and the chances of me getting liver cancer are quite high. And now, my skin is very dry, I have swollen arthritic fingers, so some days I can't hold my knitting needles or a knife. These are smaller things, but they all add up.
49. Moreover, my various other illnesses, namely the cirrhosis, Large B-Cell Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, gallbladder disease and development of Type 2 diabetes can all be attributed to HCV. These diseases were the reason why I was awarded the stage 2 payment from the Skipton Fund; I received the £50,000 before I developed cirrhosis.

Impact on my private, family and social life

50. As I now have cirrhosis and had to be very careful with my liver even before I was diagnosed as such, I found that socialising was not the same. It does not feel the same, when everyone is out and drinking and you cannot. It stopped me socialising for a while because I just could not enjoy it. I used to be the life and soul of the party, but after I was diagnosed with HCV I was too scared to drink alcohol. I found that I was apologising for the fact that I was not drinking, which of course was not my fault.
51. My illness has of course also impacted on my family. My older daughter, who may also be providing a statement to the Inquiry, can remember how exhausted I used to be when I came home from work.
52. My younger daughter carries guilt that in some way she is responsible for what happened when I gave birth to her. Of course, this is ridiculous, how could it be her fault? Nevertheless, this is how she feels and she should not have that burden.
53. I have also missed out on doing things with my grandchildren. They are so beautiful and such good fun, they are my world but I just do not have the

energy to spend as much time or interact with them as I would like. I haven't been able to take them to places that I otherwise would have. At times I was also frightened to even touch my grandchildren, as I was so scared that I might pass my infection on to them.

54. My lack of energy has additionally impacted on my relationship with Glenn. We had big plans and wanted to do so many things together. We had only been together for a few years when my health seriously started to take a turn for the worse. We had been planning for a long time to go to Las Vegas for my 60th birthday, but this was not realistic in the end, due to my condition.
55. I have also been unable to discuss my illness with many friends, as I did not want many other people to know that I had Hepatitis C. Whenever I told someone, I felt compelled to apologise for it. I felt as though it was my fault even though I knew it was not. I just felt dirty.

Financial and work-related effects

56. Whilst I was trying to deal with all my illnesses and treatments, I had a lot of other things going on at work that did not make my life easier.
57. I was initially mortified when I had to tell my workplace that I had Hepatitis C. Of course, I did not tell everyone, only the people that I worked closely with. I had to balance my embarrassment of telling people against my feeling that anyone I worked closely with should be aware of my infected status for their own protection.
58. Nevertheless, my workplace just did not understand what I was going through, and how my brain was being affected by the treatments. At that time, I had worked with RBS in different branches for approximately 20 years. I had been a branch manager and I was very proud of the job I was doing. But work did not understand the nature of my illness, and actually while I was off sick, they gave my job away without telling me.

59. When you are unwell, you have to have something to look forward to. My granddaughters motivated me, as did my daughters and Glenn. However, when I found out that RBS had given my temporary replacement the job permanently and had effectively got rid of me, I lost some hope. I just wanted to get back to normal life, including home/family and work but with my job being given away I felt like I had lost the prospect and that goal to lead a normal life again.
60. I was also angry at the fact that I was not told about the change in circumstance with my job - I actually found out via Facebook, when a friend/colleague told me that she did not know that I had left. I hadn't as far as I was aware, but I then knew that I didn't have my job to go back to.
61. I felt worthless, and lost any bit of hope I had. My bank was taken over by NatWest and so people were becoming involved who didn't know my case or even bother to read my notes, so they did not know the circumstances. I think that hit me quite hard because I was proud of the job I was doing. I was a branch manager after all.
62. The situation with work got worse sometime around 2014, when I received a redundancy letter in the post. The branch had a new manager by then. I received a letter through the post about redundancy saying that I could take the redundancy package or apply for one of the new jobs, as my old job was gone. I called the new manager to discuss my situation, and she was so sarcastic when she spoke to me. She admitted to never having read my notes, so she had no idea what I had been through or what I meant when I explained about the effects on my brain.
63. At that time, I was still on an insurance package that meant I was receiving half pay for five years, while off sick. When the new manager was discussing my options with me, she said that I could take redundancy or apply for a new role (my job had been reallocated). She told me that my half pay was finished and I would soon lose it. This was a blatant lie but unfortunately, I did not realise it at the time. I was therefore effectively

pushed into taking the redundancy package, which made me feel absolutely worthless at a time when I needed hope. I later found out that I would have had a further two and a half years of half pay. Had I not been misled, I would not have taken the redundancy. I was still sick and could have justifiably continued.

64. Taking the redundancy package has now left me with no life insurance, and it has negatively affected my pension. I was not looking to retire until 67; I was convinced that that was the age when I would get my government pension. However, I was effectively pushed into taking early retirement at 62.
65. With regards to insurance, I am now unable to obtain life insurance. This is not because it is cost-prohibitive, but simply that no insurance company will cover me. For travel insurance, I now have to pay a premium, whereas it was free when I was working with the bank. Therefore, not only did my infection cause me to lose my free travel insurance through work, but I now have to pay a premium for it.

Impact on medical/dental care for any other conditions

66. I felt that I was treated differently when I went for blood tests at the hospital due to my infected status. I noticed that all of the medical staff would put on gloves and aprons, which they did not do when treating other people. I also once had to be isolated on a men's ward.
67. My dentist takes more care when he is treating me as well. He is a lovely dentist and is open with me about my treatment. He was also discreet so that the nurse in the surgery would not necessarily know I had HCV, but he did take special precautions with me.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

68. I have not faced difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support in consequence of being infected with HCV. However, I was never offered any counselling or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

69. I have received the stage 1 and stage 2 payments from the Skipton Fund. I was told about the Skipton Fund by Doctor Grey when he diagnosed me with Hepatitis C. He was very helpful and gave us all of the information to apply for the payment.
70. I do not remember many other details about the application process for Skipton. I mainly just recall that I received the £20,000 lump sum initially, and then the £50,000 lump sum.
71. I was grateful for the money. I had never had that kind of money before. However, it dawned on me that it was really only the equivalent of two and a half years' salary. When I received the stage 2 lump sum of £50,000, I gave it to my two daughters immediately as I was convinced that I was going to die.

Section 8. Other Issues

72. My main hope for this Inquiry is for it to prevent anything like this ever happening again. I hope that nothing will be hidden and that no lies are told. We need recognition for the pain, hurt and suffering that has been caused to people like me. We need answers. This illness has changed me from the person that I used to be, and has robbed me of my potential.
73. My Hepatitis C is now undetectable (as opposed to being with certainty, clear), and I had expected to be completely better by this point. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as I have had to deal with multiple medical conditions and complications. Therefore, I dread the six-month

check-ups and scans that I have to attend. I always fear that the virus will come back.

74. It did not have to be like this. There were many missed opportunities when I could have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C earlier. I could have been recalled when medical professionals first became aware that some people had been infected with HCV through blood transfusions; I had lived at the same address for 30 years so I would not have been difficult to find.
75. I believe that the sad thing is that there are still some people out there who have got Hepatitis C and do not know it. For all of those who have been infected, there should be adequate compensation. My hope is that those who may receive compensation will still be young enough and well enough to enjoy it and do something with their lives. Because I do not think that I will be here to see it.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 22/2/2019