



Witness Name: Catherine Ridgway
Statement No.: WITN0167001
Exhibits: **WITN0167002/3**
Dated: 7 November 2018.

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CATHERINE JULIA RIDGWAY

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

I, Catherine Ridgway, will say as follows: -

Introduction

1. My name is Catherine Ridgway and my date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry. I am a single woman, and I live alone in my own house.
 - 1.1. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C, which I contracted either as a result of a blood exchange at the age of 48 hours or from a blood top up I received on GRO-C 1975. In particular, I shall discuss the nature of my illness, how it has affected me, and the impact it has had on my life.
 - 1.2. I have asked my mum to be with me for support whilst I give this statement. She will help me fill in some of the details of events that happened in my early years.

Background

2. Following a natural birth with no complications, I was taken to the Special Care Baby Unit. This was without my mother's consent. It later transpired that this was due to my mother and father's blood groups being incompatible.

Infected Blood Inquiry

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- 2.1. As a result of the incompatibility, I had to have a blood exchange. This was done without the knowledge or consent of my mother.
- 2.2. My mother was discharged from the hospital and returned home. I was kept in the baby unit for approximately one week then, my Mum and Dad came and took me home. However, I became unwell over the next 5 to 6 weeks. My mother took me back to hospital [GRO-C] 1975, where I was given a blood top-up.
- 2.3. As a child, I was always ill and did not know why.
- 2.4. On 6 June 1999 I donated blood for the first time. Following this, I received a letter from the National blood service Sheffield, dated 6 July 1999 informing me that I was carrying antibodies to the virus which causes Hepatitis C.
- 2.5. Following this, I rang to arrange an appointment, this was when I was informed that I had been infected with Hepatitis C.
- 2.6. Since this time, I have undergone extensive treatment for my infection and biopsies for related liver complications. I have now developed Bipolar affective disorder as a result of my Hepatitis C and treatment.

How Infected

3. I was born in Derby City Hospital. This is now called the Royal Derby Hospital. My mum has told me that there were no complications throughout her pregnancy or the birth. However, she said that I came out a "funny colour".
 - 3.1. Within 30 minutes of being born, I was taken to the Special Care Baby Unit. My mum did not go with me and was not told why I was being taken away.
 - 3.2. My mum remembers being reunited with me 24 hours later. She describes being taken to the Unit in a wheelchair and seeing me in an incubator. She cannot remember seeing any tubes attached to me.
 - 3.3. She was informed that I had received a blood exchange due to the incompatibility of her and my Dads blood groups. My Mum is [GRO-C] [GRO-C] and my father is [GRO-C]. The hospital would have been aware of this from her medical records following the birth of my brother.
 - 3.4. I have a handwritten document dated [GRO-C] 1975 from Dr J L Filer Medical Centre that states [GRO-C] incompatibility at birth", "exchange transfusion at 48 hours".
 - 3.5. My Mum was discharged. I went home about one week later however, over the next 5-6 weeks I became very unwell.

- 3.6. On GRO-C 1975, mum took me to the Dr J L Filer Medical Centre, Four Lane Ends, Horsley Woodhouse Derby, DE7 6AU. This is now called The Arthur Medical Centre. The handwritten document I have already referred to shows that on this day I was "pallid, jaundiced, lethargic" and had a "pan systolic murmur". The doctor told my mum to take me straight to the Derbyshire Children's Hospital, North Street, Derby.
- 3.7. I spent a couple of days at the Children's Hospital and was given a blood top-up. The hospital did not provide my parents with any information about what was wrong and they were not told about the blood top-up until after it had been done.
- 3.8. I have never had any other transfusions and I believe that I was infected with Hepatitis C through, my blood exchange, the blood top-up or indeed, both.
- 3.9. On 6 June 1999 I donated blood for the first time. I knew there was something wrong because the nurse attached a brown paper luggage label to my blood bag. This was not done to anybody else's blood bag. I was constantly petrified after this, as I thought I had HIV or something equally sinister.
- 3.10. A letter dated 6 July 1999 and marked "private and confidential" arrived at my home address. It was from a Senior Clinical Medical Officer and another doctor was cc'd in. The reference "DAJ/CAM/HCV1/D24842006" was included. The letter explained that testing for Hepatitis C had started on all blood donations and that I was one of a number of donors with antibodies to the virus that causes Hepatitis C. I was told that some people develop health problems as a result of this, however I should not be alarmed as many other people appear positive and are quite well.
- 3.11. The letter told me not to donate blood or plasma or carry an organ donor card for the time being. It also advised me to receive specialist advice and that there were many other tests available to clarify my particular situation. Finally, it said that they would like to discuss this with me and repeat the blood test to confirm their findings. They gave me a telephone number to call (01142 034 800) and the names of two people to speak to.
- 3.12. I was horrified. I did not know what Hepatitis C was. I nearly fell in the 'dog bed' with shock when I read this. There was no support within the letter and I feel that more information should have been given to me.
- 3.13. I called the telephone number and arranged an appointment at the National Blood Service, Trent Centre, Longley Lane, Sheffield, S5 7JN on 14 July 1999.
- 3.14. The appointment was a bad experience. I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C, genotype 1a. The nurse asked me questions about my sexual history, past relationships and drug use. I explained that the Hepatitis C was a result of the blood exchange and top-up. The nurse told me not to tell

anybody about my infection other than close family and that I would probably be dead by the time I was 40. This caused significant damage to my brain, my life and my way of thinking. I felt as though I had a dirty disease that I had to keep secret. I thought 'it's in my veins, it's in my blood stream, I cant get it out, it's inside me'.

3.15. It was horrible. I felt like I was being interrogated, grilled and offended. I came out very upset. I hadn't done anything wrong but was made to feel as though I had.

3.16. I was told not to share razors or come into blood contact with others because the virus was extremely contagious. I was not told what to do regarding sexual activity and I am scared that this will come back to haunt me; what if I had passed it on unknowingly.

Other Infections

4. I do not believe that I have been infected with anything other than Hepatitis C. I recently became paranoid about having HIV. For peace of mind, I had a blood test for HIV on 24 May 2017, which came back negative.

Consent

5. I believe that I have been tested for Hepatitis C without my knowledge. When I donated blood on 6 June 1999, I was not informed that my blood was going to be screened for Hepatitis C. Since my diagnosis, I have had blood tests on numerous occasions. I had not consented to these tests and they did not inform me of what they were for, however I do not know if any of these tests were for research purposes. On one occasion, having seen what I was being tested for, listed on a form, I resorted to Google to find out more information.

Impact

6. Hepatitis C has destroyed my life.

6.1. I have suffered physical effects from my infection throughout my life. As a child, I was tired and lethargic. I often suffered with thrush, cystitis, colds and the flu. The doctors did not look into the cause of any of my ailments. I do remember my Mum having to keep putting me into a cold bath in order to help relieve the symptoms of my thrush. I had my adenoid and tonsils removed. I suffered terribly with my teeth and was always having to go to the dentist with my dad.

6.2. After one of my operations, I returned home and a few days later my nose began bleeding severely. The blood was pouring out of my nose and would not stop, nor would it clot. I remember being taken to the A&E at Derby Royal Infirmary, where the nurses kept bringing me cardboard trays to catch the blood. I was put in a side room with no curtains or blinds at

the window. I felt petrified and was having dark thoughts about monsters coming to get me. I will never forget the fear. I was 8 years old.

- 6.3. These physical effects had a huge impact upon my school life. I was always behind in sports and struggled to concentrate during classes due to brain fog. I felt detached and isolated from other children and was picked on for having scabby legs. The suffering continued throughout my teenage years. I bruised easily and remember being told by doctors that the bruising all over my legs was normal for a teenage girl. I also started being sick and developed asthma. I was ill every single Christmas during my childhood.
- 6.4. As an adult, I was always exhausted. I had to go back to bed whenever I could and often just getting up the stairs was too hard work. Thrush, cystitis, sickness, bruising and bleeding remained a big problem. I had weeping sores on my head and began to lose my hair, this really upset me.
- 6.5. On 7 July 1999 my whole world changed. I became paranoid and lost control of who I was. I did not give a fuck about myself; after all I had a dirty disease. This not giving a fuck attitude has carried on throughout my life. After all, who wanted me? No one. Even the health professionals had told me not to tell anyone about my infection. I lost all sense of self-respect and felt very alone.
- 6.6. My head was messed up. I felt rough with crippling anxiety, panic, depression and brain fog. In my early 30s, I started solitary drinking. I remember sitting on my own at home, smoking cigarettes with music playing and drinking bottles of wine, alone, to block out the fact that I had Hepatitis C. I felt responsible and that I deserved to be lonely.
- 6.7. As time went on, I could not cope. My life was in complete chaos and spiralling out of control. I put myself in dangerous situations and started hanging around with hideous people. I was losing things and getting lost. I was finally referred to mental health services in July 2008.
- 6.8. Since finding out that I had the virus, I am always wanting to self-harm. I hate myself. I want to kill myself a lot of the time.
- 6.9. After being diagnosed with Hepatitis C I began to suffer from lots of mental disorders including Anxiety disorder, Depression, Panic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Bipolar affective disorder, all of which I continue to suffer with today.
- 6.10. I was diagnosed with Bipolar affective disorder on 25 September 2009. I have a letter from a Consultant Gastroenterologist, dated 24 January 2018 that states "it is my opinion that this [Bipolar affective disorder] is definitely related to the infection and the treatment necessary to relieve [me] of that [Hepatitis C] infection". I do not feel as though I have been properly supported by health professionals and feel that I should have

been diagnosed with Bipolar affective disorder sooner than I was. Paul Batey has taken a photo of the letter I mentioned above. It is exhibit no **(WITN0167/002)**

- 6.11. Due to my Bipolar affective disorder, I cannot make plans, my mood changes quickly I have become insular and isolated. My body aches, I feel sick and dizzy, my mind races constantly and I am in bed at 7:00pm every night. I see a Clinical Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) twice a week, a Psychiatrist every 6 weeks, a Psychiatrist Psychotherapist once a week and my GP once a week. As well as the above, I receive daily phone calls during the week from my CPN, as I am now classed as 'high risk' on my recent safety assessment form.
- 6.12. It was a huge relief to have an explanation for my mental suffering, but I was also devastated to have another illness with a stigma attached to it. My life was ruined again, and I have never had a level or degree of stability, other than a few months, in all these years. Every day is a battle. I am currently on an episode of Bipolar affective disorder that started on 12 August 2017.
- 6.13. After 8 years from being diagnosed and following continual outpatient visits to the liver consultants, I was finally told on 6 July 2007 that I could begin treatment for my Hepatitis C. The doctors discussed the treatment available (pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin) and the possible side effects. They asked if I had suffered depression in the past and I said "nothing serious"; I was light hearted and keen to start the treatment. They told me how to prepare for the treatment and explained that I needed to be in a "good place" to begin. I felt strong and assertive and never dreamed that I would get depression. My main concern was how I would cope with administering the treatment myself – I knew it would be hard as I had a fear of needles.
- 6.14. I started treatment in the afternoon of 7 September 2007. It consisted of pegylated Interferon (100mcgs) and Ribavirin (Rebetol 400mg in the morning and 600mg on an evening). Within 20 minutes of starting the treatment, my stomach swelled. The Hepatitis C nurse advised me that I would experience flu-like symptoms.
- 6.15. By 7:45pm my shoulders and wrists ached and my left eye twitched. It felt like flu in an instant. It was pure pain and agony. My blood was running cold, pulsing through my veins. I needed to go to bed but could not move. I crawled from the floor to the stairs and went up one by one. By 9:15pm my arm, neck and head ached. I felt sick and could not get warm or stop shaking. I was covered in goose-bumps. I put on layers of clothing and covered my legs with cushions to keep warm. From 11.45pm – 1.15am, my skin was red hot, I had terrible pain in my head and it was hard to move. My stomach hurt. This happened every time I took the injection, which was every Friday for 6 months, and lasted until the following Thursday.

- 6.16. The side effects of the treatment caused me to have sore skin and eyes, there was skin loss, sties, bruises and sores that looked like cigarette burns all over my body. Paul Batey has taken a photograph of two photos I have, showing the sores, this photograph is exhibit **WITN0167/003**. I was referred to Dermatology who prescribed me with zinc bandages. I had zero energy, a sore stomach and lost most of my hair. The hair loss broke my heart and after treatment I had to have it all cut off. I could not sleep on the treatment and was prescribed Temazepam and Zopiclone.
- 6.17. In December 2007 my liver suffered a flare. The nurse told me that it was unable to cope with the treatment. On 7 March 2008, I was devastated to find out that I had to stop treatment because the side effects had become too extreme. I felt cheated and wanted to carry on with it.
- 6.18. In addition to the Hepatitis C treatment, I had regular liver biopsies. This was a horrific procedure and involved a long thin scissor-like instrument being pushed through my skin into the stomach. The doctor would then twist the scissors to extract a piece of my liver. It hurt a lot and I was in pain for a long time afterwards.
- 6.19. I faced geographical and financial obstacles with accessing treatment. I had waited 8 years because it "was not funded" by the NHS in Derby. However, I was aware that other people had received this treatment on the NHS in Manchester and Sheffield. When I did receive my treatment, I realised that there were already some people being treated in Derby and that they had not been infected by the NHS. My parents had considered re-mortgaging the house to pay for my treatment privately.
- 6.20. For my Hepatitis C induced Bipolar affective disorder, I have taken and continue to take numerous medications: Quetiapine (250mg in the evening), Lithium (1000mg in the evening), Nitrazepam (5mg in the evening), Diazepam (10mg in the morning and evening), Sertraline (50mg), Laxido (1 or 2 daily) and Peppermint oil (3 times a day) for Quetiapine side effects. I also suffer from Akathisia (involuntary body movements in my groin), due to previously being prescribed Haloperidol and Risperidone. For this I take Procyclidine (5mg).
- 6.21. The medications I am on are constantly changing and all trigger horrific side effects and withdrawal symptoms including hair loss, stomach bloating, tremors, rocking, drooling, blinking and intrusive images. I was sleep deprived and going insane. My periods stopped for months.
- 6.22. My infected status has impacted upon my dental treatment. In the past, my dentist sometimes wore gloves and where procedures that blood were involved, he took me into another room. I know that he did not take my mum or brother into this room.
- 6.23. Having spoken about the impact of my infection from a medical viewpoint, I would like to now describe how being infected with Hepatitis C has impacted upon my private, family and social life.

- 6.24. Hepatitis C has prevented me from being able to have successful relationships. Mum and I always discussed whether or not to tell potential boyfriends about it. We would usually decide not to tell them, unless it was something long-term. All of the relationships in which I told my partner eventually broke down. This was due to an inability to cope with my illness, or through fear of themselves or their children catching my disease.
- 6.25. I also fear that individuals from my past will come back to haunt me. What if I have unknowingly passed it on? I expect one day to wake up and have "Hep C Killer" sprayed in red paint, on my front door.
- 6.26. I have been a constant burden on my family. My brother has always lived in the shadows of my illness. My parents have spent their lives caring for me, worrying about me and taking me to hospital appointments. My nephew, at 7 years old, had witnessed horrific things that no 7 year old should ever have to experience. My grandma was elderly but so supportive.
- 6.27. None of my friends knew about my infection. I never wanted to go and see them, as I felt too unwell. If I did go out, I never enjoyed myself, my mood dropped and I wanted to go home. I was extremely paranoid about infecting others with my Hepatitis C and exposing myself to further illnesses, which also impacts my social life. I am obsessed with contamination and cleanliness and cannot touch others. If they touch me, or things in my home, I have to wash my hands, Hoover and disinfect my home.
- 6.28. I experienced cruelty and slander from individuals that found out about my illness, both to my face and on the telephone.
- 6.29. The stigma associated with Hepatitis C impacted me personally. I associated the disease with other things and this frightened me. I did not like to think that I had blood from the type of blood carrier likely to have Hepatitis C in me. I suffered from intrusive images relating to those stigmas. The stigma also affected my family. They had to carry my secret for so long. It was such a burden to them.
- 6.30. My education, work-life and financial situation suffered because of my Hepatitis C. I left school in 1992, aged 16, having performed below expectations in my GCSE's. I really tried but did not get the marks that I should have been capable of. This made my dreams of becoming a vet unattainable. I took on further education after school. I attended night classes in GCSE Maths and English, and computer classes. Again, I took the exams but did poorly.
- 6.31. I have always had a job, including office work, waitressing and shop keeping. In 1995, I started work at Thornton's on the packing belt. I was then diagnosed with Hepatitis C. My managers were unsupportive and

denied me time off. Work became difficult due to my symptoms, however I tried to hide this. In spite of my illness, I worked my way up to be a credit controller, where my symptoms became worse and harder to hide. As a result, colleagues bullied me. I told my manager but he was not interested.

- 6.32. I was later put on and off anti-depressants. Changing medication affected my mood, which in turn, affected my work. I explained my circumstances to my manager and asked for time off. This request was denied, however on 14 January 2008, I did get time off work. I had begun my treatment on 7 September 2007 and up until 14 January 2008, I had been battling on in secret, until the burden of both dealing with the treatment and keeping it to myself became too much and I went off sick.
- 6.33. Upon my return to work, I felt more supported. I had a phased return with part-time hours. I really tried to get back to full-time work, however the support slipped and the bullying increased. My mental state declined and I was diagnosed with Bipolar affective disorder and told by my consultant psychiatrist to take 3 months off work immediately. My manager reacted very badly when I told her.
- 6.34. After this period of time off, I was told that my job had been made redundant and that if I wanted to return, I would have to reapply. I did not get the job. I was offered other posts, however they were totally unsuitable and untenable.
- 6.35. I was declared redundant on 31 March 2010 and received a £12,000.00 pay out. This was extremely upsetting as I had worked my way up to being a trusted employee with substantial responsibilities, including taking care of large sums of money. I had lost a job that I was good at and enjoyed, as well as losing the financial benefits.
- 6.36. In 2010, I set up a part time cleaning business with a strong customer base. The routine helped my mental health, however the Bipolar affective disorder and medication I was on made it difficult at times. Eventually it became too much and in 2018 I had to stop. I could not drive, (because of the Bipolar affective disorder) I felt anxious in other peoples' houses and the standard of work I was carrying out was not the standard I desired.
- 6.37. I suffered many negative financial effects. I had to use holiday time at work for hospital appointments, which also involved expensive car parking bills. I have a tendency to over-spend when high due to my Bipolar affective disorder. I have spent thousands of pounds on dental treatment for issues caused by Hepatitis C.

Treatment/Care/Support

7. I was not offered counselling or psychological support at the time of my Hepatitis C diagnosis. Any psychological support I have received has been in relation to my Bipolar affective disorder.

Financial Assistance

8. I found out about the Skipton Fund on the Internet whilst searching for Hepatitis C help and support. I was not told about any funds.
 - 8.1. I received a £20,000.00 stage 1 payment from the Skipton Fund on 28 June 2007. I have received various payments from the Skipton Fund and now the England Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS). These are mostly monthly payments of around £250.00, however there are also payments ranging from £1,500.00 - £6,000.00. Included in this are winter fuel payments.
 - 8.2. The process of applying for financial assistance was difficult. I don't think I would have got it without the help from my mum. We had to go to great lengths to get my medical records and prove how I got Hepatitis C.
 - 8.3. We first applied to the Skipton Fund in 2007. This involved printing out a form, completing it and sending it off. Our request was turned down because we had not provided enough information. Mum therefore wrote to the NHS at Derby and asked for my medical records. She was told that they had no records, as they had been destroyed. I would like to say here that in 2001 I had initiated a clinical negligence claim in relation to my contaminated blood. This claim did not go very far, however the Solicitor did get hold of two documents (medical records) from the hospital. I would like to question why these documents were available in 2001, but not in 2007.
 - 8.4. We then went to my GP and asked the doctor for my old medical records. Someone rooted through the records and found a piece of paper detailing my exchange at 48 hours. We sent this to the Skipton Fund and my application was accepted.
 - 8.5. We then heard that the EIBSS was taking over from the Skipton Fund and consented to our details being passed over. The paperwork for the EIBSS was difficult to complete and caused me a lot of stress. I needed to arrange an appointment with my Gastroenterologist and Liver Consultant to complete one of the forms. A lot of patients required this, so this consultant tried to set up a clinic. However, Royal Derby Hospital would not provide the doctor with a room for this and he had to source a room in another department of the hospital: Derby Private Healthcare. This incurred a charge of £180 per patient, which we had to pay. We have since been reimbursed for this by the EIBSS.

- 8.6. I have also been awarded Employment Support Allowance, Disability Allowance and Personal Independence Payment. The process to secure each award was long and gruelling.
- 8.7. The most difficult thing that I have had to do is prove my illness.
- 8.8. No amount of money can put back what has gone wrong in my mind. I feel angry for the suffering I have undergone and impact it has had upon my family. However, I would like to question why sufferers in Ireland were awarded £190,000.00, whereas those in England only got £20,000.00

Other Issues

9. I have evidence backing up everything I have told you in my statement.
- 9.1. Due to the lack of support and help that I received, I decided to set up a support group for Hepatitis C in Derbyshire. This was in 2008. Mum supported me with this. My main purpose of the group was to make sure people knew that they were not alone. I did not want people to feel how I had felt. I was passionate to help people with the same issues I had.
- 9.2. I made packs for attendees, which included helpful leaflets with information on how to prevent Hepatitis C, how it can be transmitted, the symptoms and who to talk to. I formed a committee and we offered basic help and advice to sufferers and those affected. I rented out a community centre in Derby and we met on the second Thursday of every month. I was in touch with charitable organisations, for example the British Liver Trust.
- 9.3. My story and subsequent setting up of the support group was in local papers and on Sky news. I also spoke at national conferences around the UK.
- 9.4. Unfortunately, numbers began to dwindle and the types of treatment available had changed. I was unable to get more members and could no longer provide advice in relation to the new treatment. In addition to this, my Bipolar affective disorder became an obstacle. Sadly, the group came to an end and my last meeting was 8 July 2010.
- 9.5. I have been asked if there are any questions that I would like to put to the Inquiry:
- 9.6. Why were my medical records possibly destroyed between 2001 and 2007?
- 9.7. If medical records were available from 5 November 1975 and 24 October 1975 in 2001, why were medical records from my birth on 3 September 1975 not available at this time?

- 9.8. A doctor living near my dad, who worked at the Children's Hospital at the time of my top-up, said that details of my top-up would have been recorded on a document called an A4. He said that this record would have been both in writing and in the form of a microfiche. I would like to know what has happened to these records, and if they have been destroyed why?
- 9.9. Why have I never been offered further screening for Hepatitis C since my all clear? I have had a test since then, but I did it off my own back.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated. *7th November 2018*