

Witness Name: Bernard Birkett

Statement No.: WITN0246001

Exhibits: N/A

Dated: 5 November 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BERNARD BIRKETT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29 October 2018.

I, Bernard Birkett, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Bernard Birkett. My date of birth is GRO-C 1942 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am retired, and married with two children, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.
2. I am a haemophiliac with Haemophilia A, and my condition is mild to moderate. I intend to speak about my infection of Hepatitis C as a result of being treated with Factor VIII products. In particular, I intend to speak about the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me and my family.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In May/June 1976, I was treated at the Sheffield Royal Infirmary for a dental extraction. The doctor in charge was Prof Blackburn. At this time, I was infected with Hepatitis C after being given contaminated Factor VIII products.
4. I returned to my employment some time after being discharged from the Haemophilia Centre. Following that, I did not attend the Haemophilia Centre for several years.
5. In the early 1980s, I received appointments to attend the Royal Hallamshire Haemophilia Centre. After several visits, I asked why I was being screened. It was only then that I was told that I had been infected with Hepatitis C as a result of infected blood products.
6. Following that visit, I was seen on a very regular basis.
7. I was advised that I was suffering from clinical hepatitis. I was told that there was no treatment available, and that it was only a matter of time before I would get better. The only advice I was given to manage my condition was to avoid fatty foods and too much alcohol. The doctor I saw at that time was Dr GRO-D.
8. It was not until the 1990s, after having a liver biopsy, that I was advised about the effects of alcohol by Dr Makris. I should have been given this information twenty years earlier.
9. I now know that I am suffering with cirrhosis of the liver, as a result of being infected by contaminated blood products.
10. I was not given any information of others being infected.

Section 3. Consent

11. I do not believe that I was treated or tested without my knowledge.

Section 4. Impact

12. The mental effect of being infected with Hepatitis C and knowing that it would lead to cirrhosis of the liver is soul destroying. Now, being monitored for liver cancer greatly adds to that stress.

Section 5. Financial Assistance

13. I have received financial assistance from the Skipton Fund and the NHS Business Services Authority.

14. I was informed about financial support by the Sheffield Haemophilia Centre and the Skipton Fund.

15. I received two lump sum payments, and I am receiving a monthly payment.

16. The process of applying for financial assistance was to inform the relevant fund of my medical situation. They then sent a claims form to be filled in by the medical team that was caring for me.

17. There have been no difficulties obtaining assistance and to my knowledge, no preconditions have been imposed.

Section 6. Anonymity

18. I do not wish to apply for anonymity as I would like people to know how a group of unfortunate people have been mistreated for so long by successive governments.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed ____ B Birkett _____ *

Dated ____ 5-11-2018 _____

* This version of the statement has not been signed by Bernard Birkett. The Inquiry holds a handwritten statement signed by Bernard Birkett. The Inquiry has taken the detail from that and adapted it into its standard form. There have been some necessary changes made to adapt the original statement into the Inquiry's standard form, but there have been no material changes, additions, or omissions.