

Witness Name: P Armstrong

Statement No: WITN1077001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: December 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PATRICIA ARMSTRONG

I, Patricia Armstrong, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Patricia Armstrong. My date of birth is GRO-C 1948. I live at GRO-C
 GRO-C with my husband
Tony.

2. We have two sons, Neil and Timothy, who both contracted Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated blood products. Tony (WITN1623001), Neil (WITN1078001) and Timothy (WITN1079001) have all given separate statements to the Inquiry.

Section 2: How Affected

3. Neil and Tim were diagnosed with Haemophilia A when they were babies. I think Tim was diagnosed in about 1981 when he was 9 months old. He had fallen on a toy garage and was badly bruised. I remember a social worker was called to investigate whether he had been abused but the hospital then realised that he had Haemophilia.

4. Tony and I found it very difficult to manage as both boys were had severe Haemophilia A and therefore were in and out of hospital a lot.
5. They were both treated at Great Ormond Street, London and St Richard's Hospital in Chichester. Dr Bateman oversaw their care at St Richard's.
6. When we went on holiday we were not given factor to take with us. If one of the boys needed treatment they were treated at the local hospital.
7. It was recommended that we send the boys to Lord Mayor Treloars School because they would be able to manage their Haemophilia and education there. Neil went in 1986 and Tim followed in 1989.
8. Dr Bateman warned us that the boys should not have American Factor VIII because it had come from "dodgy prisoners". I cannot recall when he told us this but it must have been after Tim was born because I remember him saying "your boys" shouldn't have American Factor VIII. He told us that he would send British heat treated Factor VIII to Treloars for the boys to be treated with.
9. Neil loved playing sport but was told not to by the school. His friends played football and were pumped full of American Factor VIII. I believe he was told not to play because they only had limited quantities of Factor VIII to treat him with.
10. I believe Dr Bateman saved our boys' lives because he tried to keep the boys on cryoprecipitate until UK Factor VIII was available. He was aware there was a UK shortage of Factor VIII.
11. I remember Tony coming home when the boys were young and saying that there was something in the newspaper about infections in the blood given on the NHS. This was the first time that we had heard about it.
12. We were not told that the boys had contracted Hepatitis B or C until later on.

Section 3: Other Infections

13. I believe that both my sons were infected by contaminated blood bought from America. Neil contracted Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. Tim contracted Hepatitis C.

14. In addition both boys are at risk of vCJD.

15. I also believe that they may have been exposed HIV even though they both tested negative for the same.

Section 4: Consent

16. Neither Tony nor I recall being asked to consent to the boys being tested for HIV or any of the strains of hepatitis.

17. We don't recall being asked to sign any forms relating to medical treatment when the boys were admitted to Treloars.

18. Both boys had regular blood tests when they were admitted to hospital, seen in clinic and at school but we did not know what these tests were for. We assumed they were routine.

19. The only information we were given was the information by Dr Bateman referred to at paragraph 8 above.

Section 5: Impact

20. If we had known that Treloars were still using American Factor VIII we would never have sent them there. Neil went to Treloars before Tim because he was older and he saw a lot of his friends die. Tim also had friends die but to a lesser extent. This has impacted on both boys.

21. I am a naturally highly strung person and have found all of this very difficult to cope with. When I realised what was happening at Treloars and we found out

that boys there were infected with HIV I became phobic that my boys would be infected. I believe the school knew there was an issue before either of my boys were accepted there and I believe that we should have been fully informed of the position.

22. After the boys went to Treloars and we found out that other boys there had HIV I became terrified of blood. I remember once that I pricked my finger on another boy's school badge and I was so worried that I might have contracted HIV that I insisted on having a test even though my doctor said it was not necessary. I think I had to wait about 6 weeks for the result. It was an awful time. I knew really that there was probably no risk of infection but there was a huge culture of fear around HIV at that time.

23. I remember on one occasion going to speak to the nurse at Treloars because I was worried that the boys might be sharing razors and that Neil and Tim were at risk of HIV.

24. I had panic attacks when I went to Treloars. We made sure that the boys came home every weekend because I did not want them at Treloars more than they needed to be.

25. The stigma around HIV and haemophilia also had an affect on our social life and that of the boys. People associated HIV with haemophilia because of the link in media coverage and we found that some parents didn't want their children to play with Neil and Tim because they knew they were at Treloars and had haemophilia.

26. Neil was unhappy at Treloars. He was kept down a year and was not allowed to play the sports he enjoyed. I now believe this was because they were short of British Factor VIII and Dr Bateman had specified that he was not to receive American Factor VIII. He was so unhappy that I made an appointment to speak to the Head Teacher at a local comprehensive school about the possibility of moving Neil away from Treloars. I remember waiting for an hour for the appointment. The Head never came to meet me. I believe this was

because he did not want haemophiliacs at his school because of the link between haemophilia and HIV/Hepatitis C.

27. I remember at St Richard's once one of the junior doctors shouted at a nurse "why didn't you tell me he had hepatitis". He was talking about one of my boys. Due to the passage of time I cannot recall whether it was Neil or Tim who had gone in for factor treatment on that occasion but they were about 7 at the time. The nurse replied saying "it's on the front of his file". The doctor was obviously worried about having treated my son.

28. Tony gave up his teaching job in 1984. We will lose the house in a couple of years because we cannot pay the mortgage. We thought once the boys went to Treloars things would be easier and we would be able to cope. Then we found out about their infections and our worries/stress just increased.

29. Tony and I have seen a psychiatrist for about the last 20 years. Dr Jackson was very good at calming me down when I panicked about the boys being at Treloars.

30. We have spent our whole lives with the boys in and out of hospital for medical treatment.

31. Over the years we have played a small part in campaigning for the truth about the Contaminated Blood Scandal to come out. We wrote letters to the Queen, our MP and David Cameron.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

32. Neil went through Interferon treatment to try and clear his Hepatitis C. He found this difficult because of the side effects. He stayed with us for a while whilst he was undergoing treatment to give his wife a break.

33. Tim cleared his hepatitis infection naturally but neither of the boys know what damage has been done to their livers by the Hepatitis C because they cannot have a liver biopsy because of their haemophilia.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

34.I believe both boys received some financial assistance from the Caxton Foundation. I do not know the details.

Section 8: Other Issues

35.I have recently heard it said in higher circles that they were going to test haemophiliacs because tests on chimpanzees were too expensive. If this is true it is terrible. It is tantamount to genocide and should be reported to The Hague.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

36.I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

37.I do not want to be called to give oral evidence at the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

Dated

20/12/2018