

Witness Name: John Joseph Morrissy

Statement No: WITN1409001

Exhibits:0

Dated: December 2018

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN JOSEPH MORRISSY

---

I, John Joseph Morrissy will say as follows:-

#### Introduction

1. My name is John Joseph Morrissy. My date of birth is GRO-C 1968 and I am 50 years old. I live GRO-C with my wife Kelly and our two children, GRO-C who is 13 years old and our daughter GRO-C who is 6 years old. I am currently employed as an assistant director at Bolton Council.
2. I was infected with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) as a result of receiving Factor IX treatment for my Haemophilia.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

#### How infected

4. I suffer from haemophilia B; my condition is severe with clotting factor of less than 1%.

5. There was no family history of haemophilia prior to my diagnosis. GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C

6. A week after my birth I bled extensively from the umbilical cord, I was rushed to the British Military Hospital in Rinteln, Germany. My father was serving in the Air Force at the time of my birth and we moved back to England when I was approximately 6 months old. The hospital said that I was close to death as I had lost so much blood. I was given a blood transfusion on this occasion; however, no diagnosis was made at this point.

7. My mother noticed that I bruised very easily and just before my 1st birthday she forced my GP to refer me to the hospital to undergo a series of tests. One of the tests involved blood being taken from my femoral artery, I bled excessively and was hospitalised, again close to death due to the volume of blood lost. I had further blood tests and I was diagnosed with haemophilia B at Peterborough Hospital. This was on my 1st birthday.

8. I was initially treated with clotting treatment at Peterborough Hospital, and then the Churchill Hospital in Oxford. Around this time I was under the care of Dr Matthews and Dr Rizza. When I was approximately 4 years old, my family moved to Liverpool and I was then under the care of Alder Hey Children's Hospital. I then moved to GRO-C around the age of 6 and I was under the care of Royal Manchester Children's Hospital until the age of approximately 18. I have been under the care of Manchester Royal Infirmary ever since. I believe I was treated with Factor XI at all four hospitals, although my mother and father believe that I may have been treated with cryoprecipitate at Peterborough and Alder Hey.

9. My mother and father were told that the Factor IX treatment was a 'wonder drug' for haemophiliacs, she was given the impression that treatment was improving at the time and life expectancy for haemophiliacs was increasing. The Factor IX treatment seemed very positive, nothing concerning was discussed with my mother nor were any side effects discussed. There was no

reason for my mother to object to the new treatment and, as a result, I was treated with Factor IX.

10. I received the Factor IX treatment at the hospital until I was around 7/8 years old. My father was taught how to administrate the Factor IX so that I could benefit from this at home. I would be injected once or twice a week.
11. Growing up was challenging for both me and my parents. My mother stitched sponges into my trousers in the knee area and elbow pads into my jumpers because I bruised and bled easily from any minor knocks or bangs. I bled on a weekly basis; as a result, I missed a large amount of primary education.
12. I was always very conscious of not being able to play sports and take part in physical education at school; I wish I could have been more involved in this, however due to my haemophilia; I was not able to take part in any contact sport.
13. At primary and secondary school, I spent a vast amount of time in a wheelchair or on crutches because I had a lot of problems with my ankles. I also wore a pair of big black steel boots to protect my ankles which definitely set me apart from the other children. I was conscious about what the other students thought of me, I was picked on and called horrible things on a daily basis. I eventually developed a thick skin and decided not to be upset about this and just get on with my life.
14. Although I missed a lot of school due to my haemophilia, I was an academic child. This is mainly due to the fact that I had to spend so much time confined to bed as I was unable to walk; there was not much else I could do apart from reading books and studying. I continued education on to college and then did a teaching training course which I quit after two years as my bleeding was causing me to miss very significant amounts of study and practice sessions.
15. I first became aware of infected blood products in 1985. I had a girlfriend at the time and her mother raised concerns about haemophilia and HIV.

Apparently she had heard from a friend that some haemophiliacs were receiving infected blood. She then arranged for me and her daughter to speak with a health professional. During this visit I was merely advised what HIV was and how to prevent cross-infection in the event that I am ever infected with HIV. The health professional did not link the Factor IX treatment to HIV.

16. After the visit with the health professional, I tried to avoid the Factor IX treatment as much as I could. However, this was not easy as it was the only treatment available to me at that time. It felt like Russian roulette, each time I required treatment there was a chance of contracting an infection, I just had to hope I was lucky enough not to. I had regular blood tests during my routine appointments but nothing out of the ordinary was ever flagged to me. I just assumed I was ok. At no point were my parents or I told what the blood tests were for – they were simply “regular tests”.

17. My parents tried to reassure me by saying that the ‘British stuff is safe’ because it wasn’t taken from prisoners or paid donations, this was opposed to the Factor VIII treatment which was known to be from America and carried the risk of infection.

18. My parents fostered a child for a few years who also suffered from severe haemophilia. My foster brother was treated with Factor VIII and, as a result, he was infected with HIV and HCV. He was with my family until 1984 and sadly died in 2013.

19. I cannot remember the exact date I was diagnosed with HCV but I do remember that I was told by Dr Charlie Hay at the Manchester Royal Infirmary. This would have been sometime in the late 1980’s when it was still known as non A / non B hepatitis.

20. I was told that I had a form of hepatitis, but it was unlike hepatitis A or B which were chronic and significantly infectious. I was advised that my form of hepatitis was not a major cause for concern, but that as they did not

understand the epidemiology of the virus as it was only recently identified, it could become more serious at a later date.

21. I was told by my doctor to look after myself and my liver. I recall his words were "do not to drink too much alcohol and take precautions around sharps and blood spills." That was it, nothing further was discussed.

22. Although I was formally diagnosed with non A/non B hepatitis (now known as the HCV) in the late 1980s, my parents and I remember a conversation during a regular clinic appointment with my consultant at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, Dr D.I.K. Evans, in the late 70's or early 80's, where he noticed a number of liver spots (he called them "spiders") on my hands and body during my physical examination. He discussed with us that it did not appear that I had either hepatitis A or B, but that they were beginning to notice the presence of symptoms in haemophiliacs which suggested they might have another variant. I later realised that the liver spotting and kidney bleeds were associated with the HCV, however, at the time I was diagnosed my family and I were unaware of this. I do not recall any stomach pains prior to diagnosis of my non A/non B hepatitis and my parents do not remember me being jaundiced.

23. From the moment I was told about my non A / non B hepatitis, I knew that it had come from the Factor IX treatment that I was receiving. This was because of the extensive coverage of HIV, and discussions with doctors and my parents about the possibilities of blood-borne infections. I also had an uncle in Canada who was a doctor and he told my parents that the system in America for blood donations was dangerous and carried risk, due to their system of paid donations. My family always assumed (and were reassured by my doctors) that the Factor IX treatment was safe as it was not from America; unfortunately, we came to realise this was not the case.

24. When I was diagnosed with non A/non B hepatitis, there was very little knowledge about this infection, therefore no treatments were made available

until the late 1990's. Around the same time the infection was commonly known as the HCV.

25. The first treatment I had for my HCV was Interferon, it was unsuccessful and I had awful side effects from the drug such as constant flu-like symptoms, exhaustion and nausea. My body felt so weak, I could hardly walk. I was taken off this treatment after a few months, due to the physical and mental side-effects.

26. I began my second treatment in 2000, this was a combined therapy of Interferon and Ribavirin. This treatment was also unsuccessful as the side effects were worse than the Interferon. I fell extremely ill and I was constantly returning to hospital. I was eventually taken off this treatment after several months.

27. I began my third and final treatment, with Pegylated Interferon, in 2004 which lasted 6 months. It was successful and I was given the 'all clear'. Nevertheless, the treatment still had awful side-effects; I had severe body aches, headaches and I was constantly throwing up. It also affected my mood, I was always short tempered and I experienced constant mood swings, and entered a depressed state. All 3 of these treatments placed great strain on my marriage, and my wife, due to the physical and mental impacts of the treatment on me and my mood.

### **Other Infections**

28. I have antibodies for hepatitis A and I have been given immunisation for hepatitis B, which I receive around every 5 years. I have also tested positive for exposure to VCJD.

### **Consent**

29. I was not aware that I was being tested for non A/non B hepatitis or HCV. As a haemophiliac, I had blood tests on a regular basis, therefore this was a normal occurrence for me and I did not realise that my sample was being used for anything out of the ordinary.

30. I do not believe I was tested for purposes of research without my knowledge or consent.

### **Impact of the Infection**

31. Being diagnosed with the HCV has had an unimaginable impact on my mental and physical wellbeing. I have had a constant worry that I might die at any time as a result of the infection, especially as I became more and more aware of so many others dying from the same infection. This fear is something that weighs heavily on my shoulders and has made me and my family very upset.

32. The HCV also resulted in the break down of my previous relationship which just added to my stress. The stigma attached to HCV was too much to deal with and I felt very alone during this time.

33. Despite the fact that my HCV has now successfully cleared, I have a constant fear that I will be diagnosed with another serious health condition as a result of the treatment I received. I am worried that my liver will eventually stop functioning and I am constantly thinking about this. The fact that my foster brother died as a result of his HCV and HIV does not help. I try and be as positive as I can, however, I am often reminded of his death. I also have the threat of VCJD hanging over me. With a family to support, these concerns place a huge amount of pressure and worry on me, as I fret about what would happen to them if I was to fall ill.

34. The HCV and its treatment had a big impact when I began my masters' degree in my early twenties; I was constantly tired throughout my studies and found it extremely difficult to keep up with the work load due to the side effects of the treatment. As a result, I had to work extra hard to stay on top of my

studies otherwise I would fail my exams. I found this very challenging and sometimes I wanted to give up, I felt that there was no point in me trying to achieve my career goals due to my poor health.

35. My HCV also impacted my private life. After marrying Kellie in 1998, we were keen to start a family; however, we could not do so due to my HCV. It was too risky for us to have children in case I infected Kellie and the infection was then passed onto the baby. Even after I received the 'all clear', we were told we had to wait a minimum of one year as a precaution before trying for a baby. I always wanted to have children earlier so that I could engage in more activities with them, this would be easier had I been younger and healthier, however, my HCV prevented me from doing so.

36.

GRO-C

37. I have had trouble accessing dental care; I found that many dentists refused to see me due to my HCV and the risk that it carries to them. This was frustrating for me.

### **Treatment/care/support**

38. I did not have any counselling made available to me as a result of my infection; I believe I would have benefitted from this at the time.

### **Financial Assistance**

39. I received £20,000 from the Skipton Fund; this was a Stage 1 payment.

40. I felt that I was not given a full opportunity to have tests to check my eligibility for a stage 2 payment. I was advised not to test my liver for further medical issues as I am a haemophiliac and doing so may cause bleeds.



41. I also receive an EIBBS payment for £333 a month.

42. All of the financial assistance I have received I have been offered, I have not had to apply myself.

43. I had to sign a waiver and disclaimer for the Skipton pay out.

### Other Issues

44. Although I have received a sum of money from the Skipton Trust, having to sign the waiver and disclaimer I felt as though I was being 'bought out'. Anybody in my position would want to accept the £20,000, however there were strings attached by signing away my rights to any further litigation. I felt that there was nothing else I could do in the vulnerable position I was in. Given the worries I already had about my ongoing health and my ability to work & support my family in the future, I felt that I had to sign the waiver otherwise there was a risk that I'd receive absolutely nothing.

### Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

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

46. I am happy to give oral evidence if necessary.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed.

GRO-C

Dated

22/1/19