

Witness Name: Sally Catherine Panter

Statement No: WITN1456001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 29 March 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SALLY CATHERINE PANTER

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I, Sally Catherine Panter will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Sally Catherine Panter and I was born on **GRO-C** 1981. I live at **GRO-C** I live alone and have no children. I have my own dog walking business.
2. I make this statement in relation to my father, John Panter who was born on the **GRO-C** 1956 and unfortunately died on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1996 at the age of 40. The post mortem report concludes that he died of natural causes however he had severe Haemophilia B and was treated with contaminated blood products. As a result he contracted Hepatitis C (HCV).
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's full medical records.

#### Section 2. How Affected

4. My father was diagnosed at a young age, probably at birth, with severe Haemophilia B, sometimes referred to as the Christmas disease. Haemophilia runs in our family and my father's mother was a carrier. It was quite severe and he spent a lot of time in and out of hospital.
5. I have been told that as a child he had to wear a special helmet to prevent him hemorrhaging. Also he was unable to play contact sport or anything like that for fear of hemorrhaging.
6. Although my father lived in GRO-C was treated at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford when he was young as it was a specialist Haemophilia Centre. I believe he was treated by Dr Rizza. Later he was treated at the Queens Medical Centre (QMC) in Nottingham.
7. My father was treated with blood products during his life so it is difficult to know when the infected blood product was given to him. I understand the blood product he received was called Factor IX, which he had to inject.
8. As far as I am aware my father was not given any information or advice about the risk of infection from being treated with blood products.
9. My parents married in May 1977 and the first they heard about any possible infection from blood products was during a Panorama programme on BBC television. My father was well at the time, he had no signs of illness so my parents were not worried but they did not fully understand the implications. Also they did not know of HCV.
10. It was not until the 1990s that my father became ill and he was tested at the QMC. My parents had divorced by this time.
11. Following the test my father was diagnosed with HCV as a result of being treated with infected blood products he received from the NHS for the treatment of his

Haemophilia. I do not know how the results of the tests confirming the infection were communicated to my father.

12. As for the date of the diagnosis, the earliest records I have to indicate that he was infected with HCV are in 1993 from the John Radcliffe Hospital; the notes refer to a Dr Rizza.

13. I was never made aware of any information about the infection. I believe my father was given some information from the hospital, but as I was young I do not remember him passing any information to me.

14. I do not think that the information provided to my father regarding HCV was adequate. I feel that information should have been provided earlier. This was especially important for a Haemophiliac to be given sound advice due to already having a serious health complication; however I cannot remember a time my father sat down and told me about the infection. I am not sure he was told much information about it at the time.

15. I was given no information about the infection or any risks of its transmission. It is only since becoming an adult that I now know how easy HCV is to pass on. GRO-C I were given blood tests at the time that my father found out, they were negative, but after this there was no further information regarding the risk of transmission of the infection to others. I regularly stayed at my father's house and I was not told not to use his razors, scissors or toothbrush.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

16. As far as I am aware, my father did not receive other infections as a result of being given blood products.

### **Section 4. Consent**

17. My father was not given adequate information about any side effects of the treatment he received for HCV, nor any possible complications or consequences.

18. I do not believe that my father was tested or treated for the purposes of research.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

19. After my father and my mother divorced in 1987 when I was 6 years old, my father lived on his own. I stayed with him most weekends after this until 1996 when he passed away, I was just 14 years old and he was only 40 years old. We had a very strong relationship and close bond and I saw how HCV affected him.

20. My father suffered with both mentally and physically from his infection with HCV. He put on weight and was bloated. He had a yellow tinge to his skin and developed skin problems such as eczema. He was fatigued and felt sick a lot, causing him to feel depressed and even more isolated. As a result of this, he stopped going out as much and towards the end of his life he did not really see his family or friends as much.

21. As a result of HCV, he developed further medical conditions and complications including cirrhosis of his liver. He suffered with sickness and dizziness and on the night of Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1996 he made a call to his mother (my grandmother), which he had to cut short as he said he was going to be sick. This was the last time he spoke to anyone.

22. I went round to his house on the Saturday with a friend but whilst I had my own key, the latch on the door was on and the curtains were drawn. I was not too concerned as if he had had a poor night's sleep due to his illness, he would sleep during the day.

23. I again went to his house on the Sunday and again there was no response from him at his home. I went to the telephone box and rang my mother who came to the house with my step-father. My step-father was able to climb onto a dustbin and drew back the curtains through a slightly open window, he saw my father on the floor. The police and ambulance were called.
24. According to the police, my father was found on the floor with the residue of the vomit in his mouth and with the phone off the receiver.
25. My father passed away after several years of a decline in his health. On my father's death certificate it states his death was due to a brain haemorrhage which was caused after a fall, and Haemophilia.
26. My father was treated at the QMC for HCV and the treatment I believe that was provided to him, (as confirmed by the police report following his death), was Interferon.
27. My father needed a liver transplant due to the cirrhosis of his liver, but he had told relatives that he had to try medication first to see if that worked at all, but it was not working.
28. I therefore feel that a liver transplant ought to have been made available to him, together with treatment more suitable for people with blood clotting disorders.
29. The treatment my father received also had an impact on him both mentally and physically. He was not physically able to get out of his home. He had signs of depression and was even more limited in what he could do. He was not able to live independently and therefore relied more on family support. He was often physically sick, tired, dizzy and disorientated and his health deteriorated even more and rapidly. He was just very unwell.

30. He had never been the kind of person to be open about how unwell he was feeling but in the last few years I do recall him speaking to me, my mother and my grandmother about just how unwell he was.
31. I am unaware if his infection impacted any other medical or dental treatments that he either had or required.
32. My father originally worked for the Civil Service, doing clerical work, but had a fall at work which resulted in him dislocating his knee and had to have his knees replaced. He walked with the aid of a stick. He did not work again and was in receipt of Disability Support Allowance.
33. He did not want to do nothing and wanted to keep busy so he volunteered for Victim Support and helped those who had been the victims of race and hate crimes.
34. My father's private and social life was affected too as he never remarried or had any other close relationships after my mother. He did not go out to the local pub as he used to, and although he had undertaken some voluntary work in the past for Victim Support, he was unable to continue this. He also started a course with the Open University that he was unable to finish due to his illness.
35. Even with my father's Haemophilia, he would still take me and my friends out for the day and even on holiday. He would also come and take me to my friends' houses but in the last few years he became too unwell to continue doing this. He became very down and could not live as independently as he would have liked. He was forced to rely on family members to help with cooking, cleaning as well as obtaining shopping and medication for him. I know that he felt sad that he had to rely on me for support at such a young age.
36. On me personally, my father's decline in health, coupled with the actual loss of my father, has been the hardest thing I have ever had to deal with. To know that

he was so ill due to being given something that was supposed to help him, has made me very angry and has affected my own relationships too.

37. At the time of his illness I was aware that he was very unwell. I was worried and upset and I had to take on the role as a carer to help at such a young age. I helped with his household tasks and seeing him so depressed, and witnessing his illness and the gradual deterioration in his health definitely had a huge negative impact on me while I was growing up. My father tried his best to put on a brave face and do all the things that a father wants to do with his daughter, but most of the time he was simply unable to.

38. Now that I am older I am learning even more information that I simply could not grasp or fully comprehend as a 14 year old; it almost feels like I am re-living it now.

39. I believe my father would have had many more years with me, and seen me grow into a woman, had he not become so ill through no fault of his own. I am so angry that he was not provided with the support and care when he needed it more.

40. All this had a massive impact on me once I left the education system and began to have relationships of my own.

41. When I was in full time education and University I believe I blocked it all out, I did quite well at school. Whilst I was at school and University there was a bit more support and community however after that there was no focus and I went off the rails, it really hit me hard.

42. After I started work, I suffered from bouts of depression, and panic attacks. I worked for the Civil Service and they arranged for me to have six sessions of counselling. I have also had some private sessions and a few through the NHS as well.

43. However, even now I still do not feel that I have fully come to terms with everything that has happened. It caused a massive gap in my family life. Once my parents divorced, my father was the link to the other side of my family and with my father's passing I became distant to my father's side of the family.

44. Going through my father's documents and medical records I am learning things that I never knew before; it feels very raw and is impacting my social and work life currently.

45. I do not believe there was any stigma attached to HCV for my father, he was quite open with it. My family knew of it but I'm not sure close friends did. But I do find it unusual that he did not find anyone else after my mother and this could have been due to HCV.

46. Both my grandparents have died but from my memory, my father's condition caused extra worry and anxiety for them, particularly on my grandmother.

47. I spoke to my grandmother a lot before she passed away in November 2018 and she said my father kept telling her how ill the HCV treatment was making him and that he wanted to try a different treatment as he did not feel that the one he was taking was working.

48. My mother wanted me to see my father but was worried that he was not able to look after me as well as he could have if he was not so ill.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

49. Neither my father nor I, were given any support or counselling and we were never offered anything.



## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

50. My father never received any financial assistance or payments from any trust or fund while he was alive.

51. However, I found out about the Skipton Fund after my father died in about 2010 or 2011. A member of my family told me about it after reading about it in a paper and sent me a copy of the article. An uncle also told me about the Fund. I then approached the organisation and applied to them directly.

52. As part of the application process, I had to call hospitals and then visit them, which was quite difficult going back to the hospitals where my father had been treated. However some of the doctors remembered him which was nice.

53. I had to obtain evidence of the laboratory tests that my father had been infected with HCV and had cirrhosis of the liver. I was forced to get physical evidence from the hospital before any payments were ever made.

54. As a result of the application, I have received two payments from the Skipton Fund in 2011. The first was a Stage 1 lump sum payment of £25,000 and the second was a Stage 2 lump sum payment of £50,000.

55. I found the application process quite difficult due to the amount of information I had to gather and I had to try and understand pathology reports, the hospitals were helpful but I felt out of my depth. Also I felt I was trying to prove something that they already knew. I was also worried that they might have destroyed the medical records and I would not be able to get proof of my father's illness.

## **Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

56. 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.

57. I do wish to be called to give oral evidence if I can assist the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

GRO-C

Signed.....

Sally Catherine Panter

Dated: 29 March 2019