

Witness Name: M L Walker

Statement No: WITN1790001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL LESLIE WALKER

I, Michael Leslie Walker will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Michael Leslie Walker and I was born on [GRO-C] 1989 to John and Glenda Walker. I live at [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Derbyshire, [GRO-C]
2. My natural mother became unwell when I was aged 4. She was unable to care for me and was admitted to a care home in Norfolk, where she remained until she died in 2018.
3. I was suddenly moved to live with my father, John, step-mother Gwynneth (who I refer to as "mum" in this statement) and two half-brothers, Steven David Walker [GRO-C]80) and Christopher (Chris) Jeffrey Walker [GRO-C]82).
4. I make this statement as an affected brother of Steven who sadly passed away aged only 37 on [GRO-C]2017 as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII Concentrate.
5. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Steven's full medical records.**

6. Gwynneth Walker (**WITN178800**) has provided a very detailed witness statement for the Inquiry and I defer to this statement regarding all matters pertaining to Steven's infections.

Section 2. How Affected

7. Steven was born in 1980 with severe Haemophilia A, having a registered Factor VIII level of less than 1%. However, he was not diagnosed with Haemophilia until February 1982.
8. I understand that Steven first received Factor VIII concentrate at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, sometime in 1984. Dr Alec Black and Dr John Leslie, were the consultant haematologists responsible for his care between December 1983 and December 1991.
9. Steven was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII.
10. Steven tested positive for HIV and Hepatitis B in December 1985. Test results later confirmed that Steven was also infected with Hepatitis C.
11. My mum was informed that Steven had HIV and Hepatitis B on 31st December 1985. These discoveries were unearthed as a direct result of her becoming jaundiced. Tests on her and then Steven revealed that Steven had been the source of her infection with Hepatitis B. Unfortunately, Steven had also been infected with HIV.
12. Mum tells me she was offered appointments at the Genitourinary (GUM) clinic, to discuss Steven's condition and prognosis. She found attending those appointments very stressful, degrading and embarrassing and the information available was limited and much of the advice was to wait and see what happened.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. Steven received letters advising him that he was at risk of developing vCJD; he had been exposed to blood products that may have been contaminated with vCJD. This information was provided in a letter but the impact this had on Steven was almost minimal. Steven had already been handed a death sentence and was struggling to survive on a day-to-day basis. News that some other infection may blight his life, in years to come, was not as great a concern as living this day or the next.

Section 4. Consent

14. I believe that Steven was tested for various viruses without his knowledge.

Section 5. Impact

15. Steven was the oldest child in the family, being about nine years older than me and two years older than Chris.

16. When I arrived, to live with the family, Steven was 13 years old and was no longer attending school, due to his poor health. He spent most of those days in bed or in a make-shift bed on the sofa, in the living room. He was tired and sick all of the time and he had no energy or patience to play with me.

17. Planned family outings and activities were often abandoned at short notice when Steven became ill or injured himself and needed to be taken to hospital. I can remember being taken out of bed in the middle of the night, put in the back of the car and going with mum and my brothers to hospital, 50 or so miles away because Steven had taken poorly during the night and needed urgent medical attention.

18. Our relationship in the early days was one of mutual tolerance of one another, both of us vying for our parent's attention. As brothers I felt closer to Chris,

who had the time and energy to play with me and who entertained me when our parents were busy with Steven. I looked up to Chris.

19. I would always try and make an effort to become closer to Steven but he was very distant and I think a lot of his behaviour was as a result of his infections.
20. He would see Chris and I getting on with our lives and he was desperate to do likewise. He longed to be in some form of employment but there was no way he could hold a job down because his infections meant that he could be on the sofa, completely exhausted, for a couple of weeks.
21. Steven was very open about his infections and he didn't care about disclosing his HIV status to people, whereas for me this was a big deal when I was growing up.
22. Steven used to go out and get drunk and was irresponsible with alcohol and this worried me and my mum.
23. I was not aware of Steven's condition or how this affected him when I was very young. As I got older, my parents felt able to explain to me about the condition Steven was born with. They spoke of the medication that was intended to give him a better quality of life and they explained how the blood products had been contaminated with the various viruses, some of which would have a life limiting effect on Steven.
24. In the following years, I observed deterioration in Steven's general health and wellbeing. Steven was required to take a cocktail of drugs for his HIV which generally made him feel unwell. The specific drugs were often changed due to his intolerance of certain medications and the side effects of many of the drugs made him feel desperately poorly. He suffered from sickness and diarrhoea, fatigue, weight loss and rashes, along with depression and severe mood swings. Steven was angry for most of the time and most of all, he felt utterly humiliated at not being able to make any sort of meaningful life for himself.

25. Steven's Hepatitis C also impacted upon his life to a great degree. The treatments for this were horrendous and Steven struggled to tolerate them. However, during this time he lived independently and rarely complained about anything. When anyone asked how he was, he would just comment "*getting there*".
26. He was around 5 foot 11 inches tall and weighed under 7 stones. He was desperately unhappy and depressed to the point where he would hide himself away, rather than attend family gatherings. He wouldn't join in at Christmas or attend family birthdays or weddings because he was so miserable that he didn't want to dampen others' pleasure at a celebration.
27. It was really sad to see how poorly Steven was and this was heart breaking for everyone and particularly for our mum. Steven contemplated suicide on a number of occasions but he felt that such an act would be too impacting on our mum. Steven lived in squalid conditions and neglected himself. He was a proud and gentle man who would not accept help because he saw this as an admission of defeat.
28. However, our family did really come together when Chris had children. Steven made much more effort with the children and we had some nice family times. However, this time was also tinged with sadness for Steven because he desperately longed for children but knew that this door was closed.
29. I witnessed Steven deteriorate before my very eyes. He suffered a great deal physically but I believe his mental suffering was even greater than the physical effects caused by both the infections and the medications used to treat the same.
30. Steven was robbed of any sort of happy life. His life was blighted from an early age and he had no hope or aspirations for any kind of future. He desperately wanted to have a partner and become a father but his infections, ill-health, depression and complete lack of self-esteem were insurmountable hurdles to achieving these.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

31. Steven received some very poor treatment at various hospitals during his early years as a result of his infection with HIV. Plastic cutlery and paper plates were commonplace and everything was thrown away once Steven has used it. Medical staff were always fully gowned when they dealt with Steven. They were terrified of catching HIV.
32. Steven was not allowed to use the local dentist and neither was our mum due to her Hepatitis B. Our mum used to be a patient at a local dentist practice and she asked if Steven could join and initially they agreed but as soon as my mum disclosed his HIV status they reversed their decision. A short while later our mum had to miss an appointment herself due to a Hepatitis B appointment at the hospital. When our mum next attended my local dentist she was very apologetic and explained the reason why she had not attended and they then told her to find another dental practice.
33. Steven ended up having the majority of his dental care at the Sheffield Children's Hospital and the care he received was not very good. He was not keen to go and they were not keen to receive him.
34. I don't think that the medical practitioners fully appreciated Steven's extremely fragile mental state. He regularly discharged himself from hospital and I believe that his mental health was neglected because no one fully understood or appreciated the global picture and the terrible burden he had to live with on a daily basis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

35. Steven received the ex-gratia payment of £20,000 from the HIV Litigation in 1991.

36. The rest of the money from the ex-gratia payment was held on trust for Steven by the Queens Bench Master, R Turner, which was used to pay his private school fees from the age of 11 to 13 because he was bullied at the local comprehensive school. Our mum retained all the letters from the Master detailing the payments he sanctioned and the purpose of the same.
37. Steven received the Stage 1 Payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund in December 2004 and £3,500 in December 2016. Steven was by that time managing his own affairs.
38. Steven also received payments from the Macfarlane Trust (MFT).
39. Our mum found the application procedure for the MFT relatively straightforward although she said that on occasions it was somewhat protracted given that decisions had to wait for meetings of the Trustees to take place.
40. The MFT paid for Steven's funeral expenses and they also funded the death certificate and probate application costs.

Section 8. Other Issues

41. I want to find out how and why this tragedy occurred. I have been following the recent oral hearings and am extremely shocked to learn that people were used as "*pups*". It is scary to think that such practices took place.
42. Nothing will bring Steven back but I want to fight on in his name and I want answers for him.

Anonymity

43. NR
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45. I do not wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

Dated.....

31/7/19