

Witness Name: Colin Burkert

Statement No:WITN2883001

Dated: April 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF COLIN BURKERT

---

I, Colin Burkert will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Colin Burkert. I live c/o Eileen Burkert (my sister) GRO-C  
GRO-C West Yorkshire, GRO-C My date of birth is  
the GRO-1972. I currently work as a self employed plasterer.
2. I am an affected person in relation to my late father Edward Burkert who died  
on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1992. He was a haemophiliac and died as a result of receiving  
contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my  
late fathers' medical notes and records. My older sister Eileen Burkert has  
made every effort to locate these records but it appears these have been  
destroyed.

#### Section 2. How Affected

4. My father had moderate Haemophilia A from birth with a clotting factor of 2%.  
He received all his treatment from the Haematology Department at the  
Bradford Royal Infirmary under Dr Parapia.

5. He received Factor VIII BPL from 1977.
6. My father was a Landscape Gardener and the sole parent of 5 children. My four siblings are Carol Prior and Stephen Burkert, Eileen Burkert and Keith Burkert who was my twin brother but died in the year 2000. My mother left us in 1974 and my father became solely responsible for our upbringing..
7. I was 19 when Dad died so do not remember a lot about his haemophilia nor the treatment that he had. He did not talk to me about it and I know now that he did not open up to my older brother or sisters either.
8. None of my brothers are haemophiliacs but both my sisters are carriers.
9. My sister Eileen has tried to obtain Dad's full set of medical notes and records but I know that she has had difficulty in obtaining these. I have seen a few of the documents that she has received and I know now that Dad's first positive test for HIV was on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1985. My father died on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1992 from AIDS. The cause of death by AIDS is not recorded on the death certificate. His death certificate certifies that he died from Cerebral haemorrhage and haemophilia.

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

10. I am not aware of any other infections but I believe that he was also infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) due to the way he looked when he died. He became so yellow.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

11. I am unable to say whether or not my father was tested and treated without his knowledge.

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

12. I only found out about my father's battle with AIDS just before his death, and the world came crashing down around me. I feel that the hospital killed my father. He was born with a condition that required support and treatment. Instead he was injected with blood that had not been tested and sentenced to death.

13. My father was the sole parent of five children, and always put our needs above his own. Sometimes I think that God put him on this Earth just to raise us, and once we had all reached adulthood he left.

14. When my father passed away, it was almost like my siblings and I were orphaned. My mother had left us in 1974 and since that time had little to do with us. Suddenly I had no parents. My father died when my twin Keith and I were 19, we were the youngest in the family and still living at home.

15. I think it hit Keith and I the hardest as we were left along in a big empty house with no father there to help or guide us. Suddenly we had to pay the bills and take on more responsibility than either of us were ready for.

16. Until after the funeral my family could have been described as very close knit, supporting each other and celebrating each others' achievements. I recall after the funeral everyone going in their separate directions; not knowing what to say to one another anymore. We were so shocked not only that he had died but that he had died from AIDS. The loss had hit us all hard and left my family shattered.

17. My brother, Stephen, had his wife and daughter, his own family, and my two sisters had their partners at the time. Keith and I only had each other to rely on.
18. We lived at home for the next two years without direction and dazed just going through the motions of living, watching our friends go out with their fathers and mothers, and being jealous of other families.
19. In 1994, two years after my father's death, my older brother Stephen bought the family home from my siblings and moved in with his wife and children. I think it was at this point it all started to change for both Keith and I. Whilst I started to move on and I met Sharon who later became my wife, Keith turned to alcohol. He was left by himself for the first time in his life.
20. The only time we would reunite as a family would be at birthdays and Christmas and for me it felt forced. Sometimes my brother Keith would phone me when he was drunk saying things like 'I have no Sharon, I have no one' and 'I'm all alone'. For five years Keith suffered with alcoholism; he was in and out of rehab, trying to put back together his broken pieces. I know he didn't want to be a drunk and he would cry over the fact that he just could not stop.
21. In 2000, it became too much to handle and my twin brother took his own life; he hanged himself. It shattered my whole world into pieces. To this day, I feel the guilt of not being there for my brother more, and for putting my girlfriends' needs ahead of my twin.
22. I have had to live for the past 19 years without the other part of me. The loss you feel when you lose a twin is indescribable. When things go wrong I should have a brother to talk to but I don't. It has made it extremely difficult to let anyone get close to me; I am terrified of loss. My brother could not cope with the loss of Dad.

23. Losing my brother broke me and the effects rippled into my marriage with Sharon as I blamed her partly for the death of my brother. Every argument ended up as a shouting match; disagreeing over why I didn't make my twin brother a priority. Eventually our marriage completely broke down and we separated.
24. The effect my father's illness and subsequent death has taken on my family is terrible. We are all broken and nothing will heal the holes we have in our hearts.
25. My father was a very popular man in Queensbury, where we lived. He was well loved. His funeral was packed with family and friends. It became increasingly difficult for us as more and more people questioned what had happened to my father. We told everyone that he had died of a bleed on his brain. It made me feel like a liar, holding on to the burden of my father's illness. The stigma surrounding HIV and AIDs turned my family into liars in order to refrain from tarnishing my father's name.
26. Sometimes I wonder whether my father kept his illness from us because of the stigma associated with HIV and AIDs, and he feared being shunned by his own family. It breaks my heart that he suffered alone through so much pain and trauma.

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

27. I feel both Keith and I were abandoned. Everyone was trying to cope in different ways. I feel if we had had more guidance and support things would not have turned out the way they did and I would still have my twin brother.
28. After the death of my father Keith and I were offered absolutely nothing in the way of support or help from the Government or National Health Service (NHS). An organization as big as the NHS should have been able to provide some form of grief counselling after the death of my father. I then lost my

brother just 5 years later which hit me very hard and is something I will never recover from. When you lose two of the most important people in your life there should be systems in place to provide receive some form of support. Obviously this wasn't the case. I strongly believe that had there been more support and help that my life would have turned out very differently, and I would have achieved much better for myself.

29. I feel very strongly that had my brother received the help he needed after my father's death that he would still be alive today. By the time my brother received any form of professional help, in rehab, it was too little too late. I am shocked that there was no obligation by the government or NHS to provide specialized grief counselling to those affected and infected.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

30. It was my sister, Eileen who found out about the Skipton Fund from the Haemophilia Society. Although I understand it was very difficult for her we did receive Stage 1 and Stage 2 payments. From what I am told by my sister Dad did receive a payment from the McFarlane Trust and a payment from the HIV litigation.

### **Anonymity**

1. I do not wish to remain anonymous and understand that this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.
2. I do not want 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

COLIN BURKERT

Dated... 05-04-2019.....