

Witness Name: John Gardner

Statement No: WITN2904001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN GARDNER

I, John Gardner will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is John Gardener. I was born on GRO-C 1947 and I live at GRO-C GRO-C Warwickshire, GRO-C
2. I make this statement in relation to my wife, Susan Gardner who has also produced a witness statement, 'WITN2905001'. She was born on GRO-C 1947. We have one child together.
3. I am now retired. I worked for the Royal Mail for 11 years and Rolls Royce for 40 years.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my wife's full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

5. On GRO-C 1988 my wife gave birth to our son at Walsgrave Maternity Hospital (WMH) in Coventry. She lost a lot of blood and required a blood transfusion. I believe at this point she was infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C), as she has not had any other blood transfusions.
6. I was not provided with any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection through the blood transfusion. The doctors did what they believed was best at the time. However, they should have told me that there was a possible risk of infection.
7. In the early 2000s my wife started to feel poorly. She went to the GP numerous times and had blood tests. Initially Susan was told that she had glandular fever and then she was told it was rheumatoid arthritis. In 2004 she had her spleen removed. She did not get a clear diagnosis.
8. It was not until Dr Perkins at the George Elliot Hospital requested for a blood test for Hep C that she found out that she had tested positive for it. I was shocked when I found out.
9. Susan was referred to a liver specialist, GRO-D at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). It was not until the second appointment that Susan was given any information about Hep C.
10. I believe that information should have been provided to us earlier. I believe as a result of Susan being infected, I contracted the infection. I used to give blood when I used to work at Rolls Royce. We used to get books with information about my blood type. I found out from that I had Hep C antibodies. I had to have a knee operation last year and they asked me to come down for a blood test. I was called back again to have the test again and it was confirmed that I had Hep C antibodies. I was never been told by the hospital that I had Hep C. I have no symptoms in relation to the Hep C and I was told that it cleared by itself.

11. For further information as to how my wife was infected, please refer to her witness statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I wish to rely on my wife's witness statement for this section.

Section 4. Consent

13. I wish to rely on my wife's witness statement for this section.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

14. Susan was always very tired. She had brain fog and still suffers from it now. She also suffered from depression and was given anti-depressants for it. She continues to take anti-depressants now. She has lost her independence and will not go out unless someone is with her.

15. Susan complained of back pains and body aches. There was a period that she lost her appetite and lost weight as a result. I believe the above symptoms were as a result of the Hep C.

16. As a result of the infection, Susan believes she suffered further medical complications and conditions. She had her gallbladder and spleen operated on. Susan's teeth have become very weak and she never had this problem prior to the infection and I believe it was as a result of the infection.

17. I believe it was approximately a month after she had an appointment with Professor Mutiner that she was offered Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. The course was for 6 months. She had horrible side effects as a result, but the Professor asked her to finish the course. After, 6 months, she was told that the Hep C had not cleared. This was quite worrying for me, as I did not know the outcome or the next steps would be.

18. She was told that she may need to have a liver transplant and may need to go on the liver transplant waiting list. However, she was later offered a trial treatment which she accepted. I believe the course was for 3 months. Susan completed the treatment and thankfully the treatment cleared the Hep C. She has since been told that there is no sign of infection.
19. I do not know if there were other treatments at the time that ought to have been made available to Susan.
20. The initial treatment, Interferon and Ribavirin had a massive effect on Susan. She was always tired, worse than what she was prior to the treatment. Her mobility was restricted and she was finding it difficult to walk. She would not engage in a conversation with me or any of the family members. She just sat there staring at me. She was like a zombie, not responsive to anything that was going on around her. I believe that if I was not as strong as I was, I would have gone down the same route as her. At the time we had a 12 year old and I had to try and live a normal life for the sake of our child. I tried to keep going for his sake. It was a very draining and difficult time for me.
21. At the time when Susan started to feel poorly, I still had work to provide for the family as I was the only one earning at the time. We had good neighbours and when I was at work, the neighbours would come and assist Susan. However, I could not always rely on the neighbours and therefore had to give up work altogether.
22. A lot of people still believe there is a stigma attached to the Hep C. People would drift away and run away from you if they knew that you were infected. We had a very active social life prior to Susan's diagnosis and then it all stopped.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

23. I believe we received reasonable care and support from Professor Mutiner. We also had two nurses who were available to call anytime. I was Susan's main carer.

24. Susan was not provided with any counselling or psychological support. I was not provided with any either. I believe that had we both been offered such support, it would have assisted us.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. I wish to rely on my wife's statement in relation to this section.


Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

26. 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.

27. I do not mind 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 27/03/2019