

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH JOY MARCH

I, Elizabeth Joy March, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Elizabeth Joy March, DOB [GRO-C]1985 and I live at [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Warwickshire, [GRO-C]
2. My brother, Andrew Michael March, DOB [GRO-C]1973, was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C as a result of treatment with contaminated blood products.
3. My parents and brothers will also be providing witness statements to the Inquiry.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my brother's 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. I grew up knowing that Andrew had haemophilia. I knew that he wasn't always well and there were certain things that he couldn't do. Andrew was living in a house up the street from us when I was young and then he went to university. When he was at home he would sometimes give himself treatment.

6. I remember when I was very little hearing arguments downstairs whilst I was in bed, although I didn't really know what was going on. I knew something wasn't right but I didn't want to ask what. I still had a nice childhood but I always had the feeling that things weren't quite right.
7. Andrew was quite a fiery character at times. I remember going out with him in his car and feeling like I was walking on egg shells as I didn't know what frame of mind he would be in. He was still always the protective big brother. He was very academic and threw himself into his music. He would always be playing on his piano at home and I remember those times fondly because he was always calm when playing his music.
8. When I was first told about Andrew's infections I was in secondary school and around 14-15 years old. My parents told me that Andrew had more things wrong with him than just the haemophilia. I didn't really understand what they were telling me and I didn't know what these viruses were, other than the fact they were serious.
9. When I was first told about Andrew's illness I felt sick. The thought that it could have been my Mum or Dad who injected Andrew with something that they thought was helping him but actually infected him is horrible.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. Andrew has been told that he may have been exposed to vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

11. As I was only a child I am not sure what testing my brother and parents consented to, however I have no doubt that Andrew will have been tested for the purpose of research over the years. This belief is discussed further below.

Section 5. Impact

12. When I found out about Andrew's infection I was still at school. It all came at once and this was at a time when I was working towards my GCSE's. I felt like my family had lied to me by keeping this secret and it took time to trust them again.

13. I had made a poster about Andrew that had been displayed at school and after I found out about his infection I felt an awful need that I should take it down to make sure no one found out about anything about him.
14. I was so proud of Andrew for everything he achieved but I wasn't able to really express it because if I talked openly about it, it could lead onto his illnesses and that was something I wasn't allowed to say. As such, I just had to hold back when talking about Andrew.
15. I've always worked with children. I did a diploma in childcare education and also did an A level in 16th Century History. I worked for three and a half years in a nursery and have now worked in a nursery attached to a school for nine years.
16. I have had tests that show that I am a carrier of haemophilia. That has impacted decisions in my life and I don't think that I want to have my own children because I don't want my child to go through the things that Andrew has been through and continues to go through.
17. I don't trust medical professionals at all and there is not one doctor I truly believe. That is just the way I am – I don't really trust any more. I have rheumatoid arthritis and they belittle my choice not to take medication. I have lost all faith in the medical profession.
18. Andrew is a walking pharmacy and has to bring a bag of pills and medicines with him wherever he goes. Recently I had to go and support Andrew at a meeting regarding his benefits. He is always a bundle of nerves at these meetings and doesn't want to go through all of it over and over again.
19. The doctors hound Andrew to take medication but he doesn't because he simply can't trust them. I think they can't work out how he is still alive, when so many others who were infected have died, and they want to research him to find out.
20. Andrew's infection is something that continues to have a huge impact on our family and it is something we have never really sat down as a family and talked openly about.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

21. I have never been offered any counselling. It is possibly something that could have been beneficial for me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

22. I worry that Andrew will be unable to continue to support himself as he lacks the financial security that he needs.

23. Andrew is frequently called in for tests to check that he is eligible to receive financial assistance. He has been infected with an incurable illness and I think it is disgusting what they put him through for him to continue to receive that support.

Section 8. Other Issues

24. The Government does not want to admit that what happened to haemophiliacs was all a test and that they will do it again. I want them to fully accept what they have done. There has been no accountability - how could people have knowingly allowed this to happen?

25. It bothers me that Andrew is continuously called in for tests in order to receive financial assistance and I would like the Inquiry to look into this process.

26. People who are diagnosed with HIV today are in a completely different position to those who were diagnosed 30 years ago. The only reason I am giving this statement is because the stigma surrounding HIV has changed. I think a lot of people want us to stay silent.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

27. I do not want to apply for anonymity.

28. I would be happy to give oral evidence to the Inquiry if they wanted to hear from me.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..... GRO-C

Dated..... 28 / 03 / 2019