

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GLORIA ELIZABETH MARCH

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

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Gloria Elizabeth March, DOB [GRO-C]1945 and I live at [GRO-C] [GRO-C] Warwickshire, [GRO-C] with my husband Richard. We have 3 children; Nicholas, Elizabeth and Andrew.
2. My son, Andrew Michael March, DOB [GRO-C]1973, was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C through contaminated blood products.
3. My husband and other children are also providing witness statements to the Inquiry.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my son'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. Andrew was diagnosed with severe Haemophilia A when he was 13 months old. He had bruises all over his body from three months old. He was initially seen at George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton before transferring to Birmingham Children's Hospital before he was six months old. Andrew was then moved to the Coventry and Warwick Haemophilia Centre

as this was more convenient for us. Professor Shinton was in charge but there were several other doctors that cared for Andrew such as Dr Casey.

6. When Andrew was a baby he was treated with cryoprecipitate, before moving on to Factor VIII when he was 3 or 4. We weren't really told anything about this change.
7. Andrew received his treatment at hospital until he was about 7 years old. At this time we moved on to home treatment and my husband and I learnt how to administer the treatment. This was a huge step as it gave us a lot of freedom and meant that we were able to travel. Previously, there were occasions when we had to end a holiday early to get back to Birmingham because Andrew had a bleed and required treatment.
8. In 1978 Andrew had just started school when he became yellow and jaundiced so I took him to the hospital. We were visited by Dr McNamara at George Eliot Hospital who told us that Andrew had received a bad bottle of treatment. They never gave this a name or told us what was wrong with Andrew; we only found out later that it was Hepatitis B when Andrew was going to college. We trusted the doctors and we relied on them; that's just how it was back then.
9. One day we saw an advert on TV warning people about a new virus. We didn't think anything of it at the time. However, shortly after we received a letter asking Andrew to go to hospital in Walsgrave for a test, and the letter mentioned the TV advert. We went to the hospital in June 1985 and went back to the hospital in July for the test results. Nothing was really said to us and I didn't really know what they were testing Andrew for.
10. Awaiting the test results, I didn't think it was going to affect us. I know it sounds silly but I felt that as we GRO-C led a good life that we wouldn't be affected.
11. I remember sitting across from Dr Shinton. They were talking about anti-bodies in Andrew's blood, although I never remember him explicitly saying HIV. We weren't given any real information or told anything about the prognosis or the potential routes of transmission. We were told to keep the virus a secret and not to tell anyone. As such, we kept it to ourselves and carried on as normal.
12. Andrew later found out that he had also been infected with Hepatitis C. He was told at the Royal Free Hospital by Dr Christine Lee.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. I believe that Andrew has been told that he may have been exposed to vCJD.

Section 4. Consent.

14. We were aware that Andrew was being tested and consented to his HIV testing in June 1985. We are not aware if any testing occurred before this date.

Section 5. Impact

15. At first they said that Andrew might live for two years. Over the years there has been so much said about him dying – he was told he wouldn't make it through his teenage years, then that he wouldn't finish college, and each time he has proved them wrong. One time when I was at the hospital with him they even gave us three different prognoses with different time scales for Andrew's death and asked us which one was preferable. They were constantly bringing negativity into his life and I would have to spend hours on the phone with him to bring him back up.

16. All through his childhood Andrew had been a very happy, placid child. When he became a teenager and aware of his infection, his whole character completely changed – it was like Jekyll and Hyde. This all happened because Andrew wanted answers which we weren't able to give him. He became quite manipulative and he was very smart. You could not talk to him the way you would other people – he saw everything differently. He over analysed every comment you made and often took things completely the wrong way. He was going to be a lawyer before his music took over.

17. This all affected our eldest son, Nicholas, GRO-C This lasted until Andrew went to the Royal College to study music.

18. Andrew is very clever and intellectual. He seemed to put his entire life into schooling and achieved his grade eight in music, despite the fact he would often miss school to go to the hospital for his haemophilia treatment.

19. When he was a child he spent hours playing the piano and learnt the violin as well. He started writing his own music when he was very young. When he went for the audition at

the Royal College he initially went just to play the piano but when he heard someone say 'composers this way' he realised that that was what he was meant to be.

20. Andrew is now a successful composer and we are incredibly proud of him and what he has achieved.

21. After Andrew's diagnosis he became more prone to other infections. He developed asthma
[GRO-C] There were certain things he wasn't allowed to eat and Andrew became a vegetarian for health reasons.

22. Andrew was suicidal when he was a teenager and has had suicidal spells after that, but thankfully I think he has come through it now. It was a tough process for him to see that he actually had a life. I have constantly had to try and help and support Andrew and bring him through at times when he has been struggling.

23. Even now Andrew continues to lose people close to him due to contaminated blood. Each time he loses a family member or a haemophiliac friend I think Andrew feels some guilt that he is still here and they aren't.

24. It has been terrible. Since the beginning I have been a bundle of nerves trying to keep everything together. It was tough enough having a haemophiliac son and having to go back and forth to the hospital and cope with all of the injections when he was a baby let alone the horror that came later once we were told about his HIV. I also had an undiagnosed underactive thyroid gland – I wasn't well at all and I had to cope with everything that was going on whilst also trying to be there for my husband and other two children.

25. The stigma back then was like having the plague. I think people actually thought we did have the plague. I even had [GRO-C] say to me 'what would you do if you found out the person sitting next to you had HIV'.

26. [GRO-C]

27. I didn't really start opening up about any of what had happened to Andrew and our family until around 2000. I went into a counselling organisation to work as a receptionist and found that this helped me to start opening up to other people. I also went to a tree planting in

Swindon and at first I was thinking 'why am I here?' – but after listening to some of the people present speak I realised that I am a victim in all this too.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

28. No one in the family was every offered any counselling including Andrew.

29. Andrew underwent treatment with Interferon for nine moths whilst he was at the Royal College. The side effects were so bad and I have no idea how he continued to study at this time. He suffered from flu-like symptoms; the shakes and was very tired and weak. After nine months we talked it through and he decided to come off the treatment.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

30. There was a pay-out some years back that was given to Andrew but I am unsure of the details.

31. We had dealings with someone called Master Turner and we were given some money that was kept on Trust for Andrew. We never signed a waiver to access this and other than this we didn't have any dealings with the MacFarlane Trust.

Section 8. Other Issues

32. We just want to know the truth.

33. The isolation that it has caused as a family is unbearable. There is nothing I could say that could demonstrate the impact that this has had on our family.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

34. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

35. I would give evidence at 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

28-3-2019