

Witness Name: Robert O'Hare

Statement No: WITN2237001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 29th June 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROBERT O'HARE**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2018.

I, Robert O'Hare, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Robert O'Hare and my date of birth is GRO-C 1961. I am a warehouse operative. My address is known to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about my mother Kathleen Rose O'Hare. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her and our lives together. I am the oldest sibling of Kathleen who had seven children. We were brought up in a mining village, GRO-C in GRO-C, Glasgow. My father was a miner and my mother looked after her seven children. She also had various little jobs and latterly worked in charity shops until she

became too ill to do so. I was very close to my mother in fact my siblings often said I was her favourite. Perhaps it was because I was the eldest.

## Section 2. How Affected

2. Despite me leaving home at nineteen years of age my mother and I were very close. I would go back to see my mother on every holiday I had. I also phoned her as often as I could. My mother was my rock and kept the family together.
3. My mother was infected with Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion after she had an operation.
4. I moved to England and left my parents address when I was 19 years of age. My family's home was GRO-C I made regular visits back up to Scotland to stay with my parents.
5. I remember in March or April of 1984 I was on holiday and had come up to Scotland and was staying with my parents. I recall that my parents went out for the evening while I stayed at their home. When they came in my mother 'was complaining of severe abdominal pain. She phoned for an emergency doctor who came to the house and suggested that she go to hospital. I do not know this doctor's name. An ambulance was called and my mother went to Glasgow Royal infirmary. I do not know the exact date my mother was examined initially but she was discharged with strong painkillers. I remember she was in bed for most of the week. The reason I remember it so well is that it was unusual for my mother to be ill as she was a healthy and active woman. I had to leave at this time to go back to England to work.
6. A few days later, I was informed that my mother had been taken to Glasgow Royal Infirmary by ambulance with severe abdominal pains. I cannot remember who told me it would have either been my father or my sister Kathleen. Her name is Kathleen Watt and her details are known to the enquiry. My mother had to have an emergency operation as it was discovered that her bladder had burst. This was

in March or April 1984 but I do not remember the exact date. During the course of the operation my mother had to have a blood transfusion. I do not know any details of the blood transfusion or why she had to have one. I can only assume that she lost too much blood during the operation. I do not know if my mother was given any information or advice before her operation and blood transfusion about the risks of being infected. I suspect as her operation was an emergency she was not. My mother was in a very serious condition and was put in an induced coma. I kept in contact with my family by phoning from a phone box near to my work because there were no mobile phones in those days.

7. In either May or June 1984 I received a phone call I believe it was from my sister Kathleen to tell me to come back as soon as possible as the hospital staff did not think my mother would pull through and she was to be given the last rites. My mother was a devout Catholic and was given the last rites by Father Flack from St Joseph's Church in [GRO-C]. I travelled back up to Scotland and visited my mother at the hospital. She was in a coma and was not responding.
8. I stayed in Scotland for probably about a month. My mother was still in an induced coma but was holding onto life. I eventually had to go back down to England for work purposes. I'd only been back in England a few days when I received a phone call I assume from my sister to say my mum was responding. My mother remained in hospital for many months.
9. I remember coming home to Scotland around Christmas time, my mum had eventually been discharged from hospital. My mum at this time was very frail and very weak. I put this down to the fact that she had had major surgery.
10. In 1988 I came back to Scotland and moved back in with my mother and father for about a year. I remember at that time my mother was in a lot of pain, she told me that all her bones were very painful particularly at the bottom of the back. I believe she went to the doctor but I don't know the doctors name but it will be in the surgery in [GRO-C]. I do not know what she was prescribed.
11. My mum had moved address to [GRO-C] in 1999.

12. In 1999 I cannot be more specific I remember she showed me a letter from the NHS. I only glanced at the letter so cannot give much detail. I do remember the letter saying that as a result of her blood transfusion she had been infected. I cannot remember what the letter said she had been infected with. I can't give any other details than that. I remember I told her to get a lawyer but she said it would be a waste of time. I did not know she had been infected with Hepatitis C, my mother did not tell me and we did not talk about it. My mother may have been given more information about how she had been infected. But at no time did my mother and I have a conversation about what she had been infected with.
13. It may be that my mother was given information about the infection and how to manage it but she never discussed this with me so I cannot say with any certainty. I do not know if she was given any treatment for her infection. I know she took a lot of tablets, but do not know what tablets they were or where she got them from.
14. I do not know when my mother was told she had Hepatitis C. She got the letter that she showed to me but I do not know if she knew before.
15. I cannot comment about how the results of the test or information about the infection were communicated to my mother.
16. I did not even know what Hepatitis C was until I saw it on her cause of death the death certificate. I do not know if my mother had been given information about any risks to passing on the infection to others.
17. I did take my mum on many occasions to hospital, probably once a week. I am unsure as to which hospital I took her too. I could have taken her to Stobhill or Gartnavel General hospital or even the Royal Infirmary. We did not discuss why she was going to the hospital. I just know she appeared to be very ill and in a lot of pain. The tablets she was taking often made my mother very drowsy and quite moody. She did at times become very irritable. I put this down to the tablets she was taking as ordinarily she was a kind and pleasant person.

### **Section 3 Other infections**

18. I do not know if my mother received any other infections as a result of being given infected blood.

### **Section 4 consent**

19. I do not know whether my mother was treated or tested without her knowledge or without her consent

### **Section 5 impact**

20. Since my mother had her emergency operation, when she received a blood transfusion, her health deteriorated. Up until this point she had been a fit and healthy woman. The last two years of her life she was in a lot of pain but insisted she continue working in a local charity shop. I remember going to pick her up on one occasion and she could not walk to the car. I remember being very frustrated with her. I was annoyed that she was still working in a charity shop for no pay and obviously in a lot of pain. I was also frustrated with her for not going into hospital as I believed that's where she should be. My mother complained about her physical pain but mentally it must have got her down and made her depressed. She did not tell me she was depressed. She would not want to worry me, that was the sort of woman she was.
21. I am not aware of any further medical complications or conditions my mother had as a result of the infection. My mother did eventually go into Gartnavel Hospital in late 1999 and remained in hospital until her death in August 2000. This was a very difficult time for me personally, not only was my mother in hospital very unwell, but I was also going through a bitter divorce at that time. I visited my mother regularly in hospital throughout this time she would always offer me advice and support. That was the sort of person my mother was always trying to help other people as opposed to being concerned with her own health problems. I remember on one occasion when I went to visit my mother at Gartnavel Hospital I was approached by a consultant and told there was nothing

more they could do for her. I also remember a nurse telling me to prepare for the worst. I do not know the name of the consultant or the nurse. I was not with my mother at the time she died however I was informed by a family member that she had had a heart attack. On my mother's death certificate it states that she died from hepatitis C.

22. My mother appeared to be very ill but she did not discuss her condition to me.
23. I do not know if my mother was given any treatments for her infection. I know she took quite a lot of medication but I do not know what for or for what condition. I do believe my mother had been told years earlier that she had hepatitis C caused by the blood transfusion she received at the time of her operation. My mother was a religious and very private person and I believe she did not discuss her condition with any of the family due to the stigma associated with Hepatitis C.
24. If my mother did receive any treatments for her condition I do not know if she experienced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing such treatments.
25. I do not know if there are treatments that were not made available to my mother.
26. My mother took a lot of medication. I assumed it was pain relief as she often complained of her bones hurting. I do not know what other medication she took or for what. As I do not know if my mother had any treatments I cannot comment on her mental or physical effects. My mother was clearly unwell, she was very frail and had difficulty walking. I just put her condition down to the surgery she had had.
27. I do not know if my mother's infection impacted upon her treatment, medical or dental care for any other conditions. My mother had 15 grandchildren who she adored and who adored her I feel she was robbed of seeing them grow up.
28. My mother was our rock losing her has had a devastating effect on all of us.

29. My mother did not tell me or my siblings that she had been infected with Hepatitis C. There is a stigma attached to this infection and I believe that is the reason she did not tell anyone. When our mother died and we became aware of the cause of death we were all devastated.
30. My mother did not work in paid employment. She did volunteer to work in local charity shop and continued to do so right up until she went into hospital.
31. When my mother was given the last rites and I travelled back up to Scotland I stayed for a month. My employers were very good with me at that time and I did not lose out financially when I took this time off work.

#### **Section 6 treatment care support**

32. I do not know if my mother faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support as a consequence of being infected with Hepatitis C.
33. I can say that no member of my family has ever been given any support or counselling as a result of my mother been infected with hepatitis C. No counselling or support has been given following her death. I am not aware if my mother had counselling or psychological support if she did I was not aware of this.

#### **Section 7 financial assistance**

34. I do not believe my mother received any financial assistance from any trust funds in relation to receiving infected blood. If she had I'm sure she would have given some to her children because that was the sort of woman she was, very family orientated.
35. It was my sister Kathleen Watt who found some information online that people and relatives of people who had been given infected blood may be entitled to compensation. I believe she applied to whatever body she needed to I know she

still has the e-mails she received and the e-mails she sent to this body. I don't know any other details. I believe she applied on my behalf.

36. On the 31 July 2018 I received a letter from the Scottish infected blood support group the letter was from a Sally Richards explaining that people who had been infected with infected blood had been put into three categories my mother had been in category one, as a result I received a payment of £70,000, this money has been split with all the siblings so we have all received £10,000 each.
37. I can provide no information about the process of applying for financial assistance as it was my sister Kathleen that went through this process.
38. I do not know if Kathleen had any difficulties or obstacles in applying for financial assistance.
39. I do not know if there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.
40. I have split the money I received with all my siblings with each of us getting £10,000 each. This is a massive amount of money to me and I am very grateful. It does not however bring my mother back so no amount of money could compensate for our loss.

#### **Section 8 other issues**

41. My sister Kathleen has got copies of all the correspondence, letters and emails relating to my mother and can produce them to the enquiry.



### Statement of Truth

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

Signed 

GRO-C
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Dated 29/6/19