

Witness Name: John Rice (Jr)

Statement No.: WITN2250001

Exhibits: none

Dated: 9th July 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN RICE (JR)

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, John Rice, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is John Rice. My date of birth is GRO-C 1973 and my address is GRO-C GRO-C Glasgow GRO-C. I am Helen Rice's son. I intend to speak about my mother's experience of being infected with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her and our family life.
2. I must have been either 23 or 24 years of age when my mother became ill and, by the time that she was diagnosed with hepatitis C, I must have been 25 or 26 years old.

Section 2. How Affected

3. I do not know how my mother came to be infected with hepatitis C. She had already been ill for a while by the time she was diagnosed. When she was diagnosed, the

hepatitis C was linked to a blood transfusion that she received after an operation. She had one operation before my sister and I were born and then another operation after I was born, but before my sister was born. Both my sister and I had to get tested for hepatitis C. However, my mother's gallbladder operation took place after I was born and that is when my mother contracted hepatitis C. I am pointing out the fact that my mother had [GRO-C] before we both were born and at first the doctors did not know [GRO-C] it was that had caused her to become infected with hepatitis C, meaning that my sister and I both had to get tested.

4. I would say that my mother's hepatitis C was severe at first. It was terrible, at one point we all thought that we were going to lose her because she was so ill. She has been better in the last couple of years.
5. At the time, we did not know which blood products my mother had received. We later found out that blood had been brought over from America that had been taken from prisoners and contained all the diseases that prisoners had. I have heard rumours that the Government was selling clean blood to America as well as rumours that there was a shortage of blood, but I do not know the real reason why infected blood from America was used in Scotland.
6. My mother received the infected blood during her operation at Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow. I cannot remember the names of any doctors because I was only 5 or 6 years old at the time. Afterwards, my sister was born. My sister is five years younger than me.
7. My mother must have received infected blood products between 1978 and 1980. I cannot remember the exact date when she had her gallbladder operation.
8. I do not think my mother received any advice in advance of her operation about the risk of being exposed to an infection as a result of the blood transfusion. This is something that is done now, but I don't think it was done back in the day.
9. My mother's GP was the person who told her that she was infected with hepatitis C. He did a few tests because of how she was feeling.

10. Not a lot of information was given to her about the infection. She had to find out a lot through her own research through the years.
11. I don't think adequate information was provided to better understand and manage the infection.
12. My mum and dad are people who hold things close to their chest. The things that my mum experienced was to do with the stigma of having hepatitis C, such as dentists refusing to treat her because of it. It was embarrassing and horrible. I think my mum might have been given a card with information about hepatitis C but I believe she should have been provided with more information. This would have made things easier for all of us. It was only Dr Mills, who explained everything once my mum was referred to him. Before that, all we had were bits and pieces of information.
13. I think my mum was first told about the infection at the hospital at Great Western Road. I was really quite angry because of the way that she was treated, even by the medical professionals. They were treating her as if she had been sleeping around or was an alcoholic. We were really treated badly, that is my view about how the news of the hepatitis C infection was communicated to us. After that, we just had to make the best of a bad situation.
14. We were not initially given any information about the risks of others being infected as a result of the hepatitis C infection. I think later on, my mother might have received more information, when she was referred to Dr Mills.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I do not believe that my mother received any infection or infections other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood products, at least not that I know of. However, she did end up with cirrhosis of the liver as a result of becoming infected with hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

16. I think that my mother was treated or tested with her knowledge and consent once she found out what was wrong with her. Before that, I am not sure. I do not know if she was

ever tested or treated for the purposes of research. When you go to hospital, doctors can extract blood from you and you have absolutely no way of knowing where it goes or what they do with it.

Section 5. Impact

17. Becoming infected with hepatitis C had a considerable impact on my mother.
18. My mum used to be an outgoing person, she would walk everywhere, she would even walk home (to GRO-C Glasgow, GRO-C) from the city centre! She had lots of energy. She went from being an active and energetic person to being bed-ridden for weeks at a time. She was very ill, weak and depressed. She is a really good-natured person, but the illness made her be very angry all the time. She was in a lot of pain. She had pain in her liver, her back and her sides, and she had no energy whatsoever.
19. The main further medical complication which resulted from the infection was that my mum has liver cirrhosis. She has trouble with her eyes now, I don't know if that is related to the infection, however, her general fitness has been taken away from her.
20. I recall when Mum was working and as the illness evolved, this became a struggle for her. I came home from work and her friend who she was working with, phoned and told me that I had to go pick her up from work one day when she was unwell. That was the end of her career.
21. The treatment that my mother received was Interferon. This did something positive as she is still alive. I do not know any details about the treatment. I couldn't tell you about any complications arising from it. My parents are proud, and they are protective of me and my sister, so there are many things that they wouldn't tell us.
22. I do not know whether or not my mum faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing her hepatitis C treatment. I do not know how long the treatment lasted.
23. I could not say whether or not there were any different treatments which ought to have been made available to her.

24. One of the effects of the treatment was that my mum lost a lot of hair. She had very thick hair, so she did not lose it completely, but it did go very thin. I cannot comment further about how the treatment affected my mother.
25. My mother had to disclose the fact that she had hepatitis C to all medical professionals and hairdressers. The way she was spoken to and treated by everyone was disgraceful. The reason why she had to tell hairdressers about her hepatitis C was in case she sustained a scissor cut. She felt that there was a stigma about it. People's demeanour changed once they found out and they spoke to her differently. She had to keep it a secret from friends and family at first. I don't even think that she told my sister and me right away. Dentists never really refused to treat her, but she wasn't treated respectfully. The attitude that she got from them was sort of "I will give you healthcare because I have to".
26. My mum becoming infected with hepatitis C had a huge impact on our family life. We could not plan any days away or do anything. Every family outing had to be a spur of the moment thing depending on how my mother was feeling. She missed a lot of eighteenth and twenty-first birthdays, weddings and other family functions. She became withdrawn. She could not plan to go out for dinner with her friends because she had to see how she was feeling on the day.
27. My mother's grandchildren have never had the chance to get to know my mother as we knew her as children. Growing up, she was always dancing and playing with us. My mum loves babies and children, but she became a nagging person who couldn't be bothered with children by the time she was diagnosed.
28. My mum had to give up work before she was given her diagnosis. My father eventually had to give up his work as well. He was self-employed at the time, and so he could sometimes work around my mum's needs but eventually this became too much. These were the times, when my parents were really tight for money. They never borrowed any money from myself, I think they would rather have gone without, than ask for money.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

29. My parents had trouble obtaining care, support and counselling. Everything was a fight and they had to pester people for it. I couldn't tell you if they were ever offered counselling or asked for it.
30. I was never offered any counselling and neither was my sister. We had no support of any kind. We were only told to get tested in case we had been infected in the womb.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

31. Initially, my mother did not receive any financial assistance from any of the Trusts or Funds, only statutory sick pay. Initially, they did not have any information either. Afterwards, they got PPI. This was some sort of social security payment, but it was a long time before she could get this. With my dad being self-employed, he could have made £5,000 in one week and then go for weeks without any work.
32. It was only when my parents found out about the committee that is working with Thompsons and started going to the meetings that they found out about the financial assistance from the Trusts. They started talking to people and everyone had a little bit of information, which helped.
33. I do not know which payments my parents might have received in the way of financial assistance from Trusts or Funds.
34. I have never applied for compensation myself due to my mother being infected with hepatitis C.

Section 8. Other Issues

36. I have been to some of the meetings for infected and affected people. I cannot remember the names of the groups organising the meetings, but it is the group that my dad belongs to. They have had meetings in Glasgow, Dundee, Perth, Aberdeen and Edinburgh. They try and organise meetings all over Scotland.
37. My parents and I have not been involved in any court proceedings due to my mum becoming infected with hepatitis C, but we have had involvement in the Penrose Inquiry

and in campaigning. My parents have attended all the meetings they can and demonstrations.

38. I cannot think of any key documents that would be important for the purposes of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

2020 15:21 GMT)

Dated Oct 26, 2020