

Witness Name: Kate Clark
Statement No. WITN2605001
Dated:3rd March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KATE CLARK

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Kate Clark will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. I have been married to Lorne Clarke for 19 years. I work as an Export Co-ordinator for a Technological Company and I have one brother Nigel.
2. I make this statement to talk about my mother Avril Margaret Nicholls and how she became infected with Hepatitis C and how this affected me as her daughter.

2. How affected

1. I had a very close relationship with my mother. We had an almost telepathic closeness as can sometimes happen when you are

particularly close to someone. We were very alike and had the same interests i.e. shopping and line dancing. We liked to socialise and have nights out. My mother was the sort of person that people were drawn to and often workmates would come to her with their problems. She was a very popular person and a good listener.

2. My mother was infected I believe as a result of infected blood given to her by transfusion in or around 1980/82 at the James Paget Hospital, Gorsleston, Norfolk when she had a hysterectomy. I cannot be more specific as my mother's medical notes and records have been destroyed. I was around 8-10 years of age at the time and my brother was about 17.
3. My mother was not a haemophiliac, nor had any other infections at this time. I am unsure as to what blood products my mother received after her hysterectomy operation.
4. I do not have any further details as I was only young at the time and this information would not have been shared with me.
5. In my family, if there was ever anything that would affect the whole family, we would have a "family discussion". I can recall my brother and I being told that my mother would go into hospital for a while for a hysterectomy.
6. I do not believe we were provided with information in relation to infected blood as if we had, my parents would have had a "family meeting" with my brother and I to discuss any risk of infection to us and to ensure we understood what was happening.
7. My mother found out she had become infected with Hepatitis C in late 1997. On reflection, we can see she was showing signs of her infection of Hepatitis C earlier than 1997, but we were unaware she had become infected at that time. She began to develop liver spots on her face and I

- remember she would try to cover them up with make up. She became clumsy and would fall over for no reason. I believe the symptoms were there.
8. My mother was always on a diet but she seemed to lose weight everywhere else on her body, other than around her stomach. She tried hard to lose the weight but it just would not go from around her middle. Then her stomach became distended and hard to the touch. She looked pregnant. My mother went to the doctor as this was now becoming a concern and he tested her thyroid function and some other tests. When the results of these tests came back, her GP suggested that she go for an ultrasound scan. The scan showed that my mother's liver was enlarged but she was not advised that anything else was wrong. My mother went downhill quite rapidly from this point.
 9. I was living in Warwickshire at this time and one day I received a telephone call from my father telling me that my mother was "really poorly" and that I should come to the Kettering General Hospital.
 10. When I arrived at the hospital, I could see that my mother was very yellow in colour. One of the doctors asked me "how much does your mum drink?" I told him that she was not a drinker and was the sort of person who would only have the odd sherry at Christmas. She never drank to excess. The doctor then insisted, and asked me to "tell him the truth". He had assumed that my mother had a drink problem. I became quite angry as the doctors asked me this question many times and I kept replying that she was not a drinker and did not drink to excess.
 11. When I asked the doctors what was going on, they told me that my mother had Hepatitis C. This was approximately in April 1999. They told me there was nothing they could do to help her. I explained to the doctor that I was getting married the following year and did he think she would make it. His reply was that "it could happen quickly". My mother

deteriorated to just skin and bone. I also remember there was the most "awful smell" emanating from her. We travelled back and forth to Kettering General Hospital, Northamptonshire with my mother, but now having to use a wheelchair for her as she was so frail. It was heart breaking to see my mum who had been full of energy and life become so ill.

12. In September 1999 my mother sadly passed away. She did not get to attend my wedding which was planned for October 2000. I was devastated not to have my lovely mother and closest friend at my wedding.

13. To this day, I cannot look at photos or videos of my mother. I find it too upsetting.

14. I believe that the information provided to us at the time was adequate as I do not think there was further information available at that time. Nobody knew!

15. I do not think that finding out about my mother's infection of Hepatitis C was handled very well. The way in which they made the assumption that my mother was an alcoholic or heavy drinker was disgusting. I think they just came to the easy answer and did not look any further. Also accusing the family of lying about my mother's drinking was insulting.

16. The family were not provided with any information in relation to the risks of infection.

3. Other infections

1. Whilst my mother was in Kettering General Hospital, they carried out a series of scans and found that my mother had brain cancer as well as

Hepatitis C. She lapsed into a coma towards the end of July/August 1999.

4. Consent

1. To my knowledge my mother was not treated or tested without her knowledge, consent or for the purposes of research.

5. Impact

1. The mental effect on my mother was that she was extremely worried about my father and not herself. She just put a brave face on what was happening to her. She believed in a "stiff upper lip" and did not feel sorry for herself. She was happy that I was settled with my fiancé and about to get married so she knew I would be looked after and my brother was also settled in his life too. I do however believe that my mother was scared about her illness. She would often reach to hold my dad's hand as though she needed that comfort and security.
2. It did however have a major impact on my Nan. My mother was her only child. My Nan began to "give up" once my mother passed away. She then had a further knock when her sister also passed away a couple of years later.
3. The physical effects of being infected with Hepatitis C showed with my mother suffering from the discomfort and appearance of a distended stomach. Looking gaunt, losing a lot of weight, becoming very frail and not being able to get around unless being pushed in a wheelchair. She would spend a lot of time in bed becoming withdrawn and too ill to even talk.
4. I remember an occasion when my mother was in hospital and asked me to make her an apple crumble. We were surprised as she was so

frail and withdrawn at that time. However I made it for her and took it into hospital for her. She enjoyed what she was able to eat.

5. I can only remember that as a result of her infection, she became clumsy and kept falling over for no apparent reason. She would just fall down to the floor at a moment's notice. I remember her falling down when we went to London for the day shopping before her diagnosis was confirmed.
6. I am unsure as to what treatments if any, were given to my mother. The doctors told us that there was nothing they could do for her and just did their best to make her comfortable.
7. I do not believe there were any difficulties in obtaining any treatment that was available at that time, or whether there were any treatments which my mother ought to have been made available.
8. The impact of my mother's infection was hard on the family and in particular my dad when my mother was bed bound or stayed in hospital. She could not go out unless she was pushed in a wheelchair.
9. There was also family stress caused when my mother fell into a coma. I was called to the hospital thinking the worst and telephoned my brother to let him know what was happening. He was obviously upset at the news and waited for me to update him when I got to the hospital. When I arrived at the hospital, my mother had woken up and was sat in bed drinking a glass of milk. I telephoned my brother to let him know she was out of the coma and doing well. He was really upset at me worrying him like this but at the time it was such a roller coaster of emotions and not knowing what was going to happen from one day to the next. We were all stressed out with all the worry.

10. None of my mother's friends came to visit her during her illness. I am unsure if they knew she was infected with Hepatitis C. They may have been worried about infection to themselves.
11. I find it difficult to explain to people what my mother died of. If I do tell anyone, I then feel as though I have to make excuses as how my mother became infected and feel the need to explain that she had problems with her liver and emphasise that she was not an alcoholic.
12. I struggled physically when my mother died. I found it hard to cope. I busied myself in doing things and sorting my mother's belongings out for my dad. At the funeral, I did not want to leave her. I did not give myself chance to grieve properly and felt I did too much. I wore myself out.
13. After my mother died I had feelings of sadness and felt "what is the point". I sought counselling from my GP. I can remember during this time there was a day when I just cried and cried the whole day. My husband was and is very supportive.
14. I find it hard to deal with the stigma of Hepatitis C. Friends or colleagues ask, how did she get it, as it is associated with drugs and sexual relations. Whether my father had become infected. I find these questions frustrating and awkward because people are ignorant of the facts. It makes me feel defensive and I have to bite my tongue when asked these questions.
15. My mother's infection and subsequent death had a big impact on my Nan, as my mother was her only child.
16. My mother could not work. She was still working in 1997/98 but by July 1999 she could not work through her illness. My father however, continued to work.

17. I often needed to take time off work if my mother was taken into hospital or if I received a call from the hospital.

6. **Treatment/Care/Support**

1. My mother did not face any difficulty in obtaining the treatment that was available to her. I do not believe that my mother and father were ever offered counselling.

7. **Financial Assistance**

1. To my knowledge, my parents did not receive any financial assistance.

8. **Other issues**

1. I have no comment to make in this section.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C: Clark

Signed.....

Dated..... 3/3/19