

Witness Name: C.RHODEN

Statement No: WITN2797001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CLAIRE RHODEN

I, CLAIRE RHODEN will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Claire Rhoden of GRO-C I was born on GRO-C 1977. I got married in 2003 and currently live with my husband and our two sons' aged sixteen and thirteen. I have one brother and I currently work as a teaching assistant.
2. I make this statement in relation to Mrs Susan Wood, my late mother who was born on GRO-C 1952 and passed away on 21 February 1994, aged 41. My mother worked as a bookkeeper but after she gave birth to me she never returned to her occupation.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother's full medical records. At the beginning of February 2019, I applied for his the medical records but I have not heard anything back.

Section 2. How infected

4. In 1977, I believe that my mother received a blood transfusion at St Mary's Hospital in Portsmouth whilst giving birth to me when she had to undergo an

emergency Caesarean. My father was not allowed in the room so there was no one to witness what happened during her labour. We cannot say for certain what treatment she received there. My mother was discharged from St Mary's a couple of days after giving birth to me. She showed no symptoms of illness for a very long time.

5. She was admitted six months before she died to Queen Alexandra Hospital (QA) and she was transferred again on 14 February 1994, just 1 week before her death, to Kings College Hospital London.
6. My mother may have received an Anti D immunoglobulin injection due to her blood type, RhD negative.
7. In about October 1993 my mother experienced health problems. I believe she saw Dr GRO-D at the QA. She retained fluid around her stomach and her eyes turned yellow. The doctor said there were problems with her liver after which she was admitted to the QA three or four times in the space of six months. On some hospital trips they drained the fluid from her stomach. I do not know what advice my mother was given here but it seemed like they did not know what they should do to treat her or what was causing these symptoms. The word 'Hepatitis' was not mentioned once during these six months. They only seemed to know that the issues related to her liver.
8. My mother never found out that she had Hepatitis C. On her death certificate Hepatitis C was listed as a cause of death and this was when our family first heard that she had been diagnosed. There were two other causes of death as well but I do not recall exactly what they were. I do not believe that she had a cancer of the liver.
9. I do not know when my mother was tested positive for Hepatitis C. I believe she must have been tested between October 1993 and February 1994, but the results were never communicated to her. The doctors therefore did not advise us of the results and did not provide adequate information.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I do not believe my mother had any other infections aside from Hepatitis C. All of her symptoms were related to her liver.

Section 4. Consent

11. My mother received the blood transfusion during childbirth in an emergency situation. She was under a general anaesthetic and my father was sent home so there was no witness to oversee what actually happened. I do not know what information or advice was given to my mother at the time, but as it was administered in an emergency, I believe it would have been limited. When my father returned, my mother was still sedated and I do not believe he was given any information or advice at this point regarding the procedure my mother had undergone.

12. I believe that my mother was treated and tested without her knowledge, without her consent and without being given adequate or full information.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. After October 1993 my mother noticed a significant deterioration in her health. During her time at QA she started showing symptoms of Hepatitis C. Every time she went to the hospital she was questioned by the doctors about her alcohol consumption, even though she rarely drank at all. Sometimes she would be admitted for days and the days when she was at home she would only ever rest. I would often return home from school and find her resting on the sofa as she felt very fatigued. Her eyes constantly had a pale yellow tinge and the swelling in her stomach increased to the point where she looked pregnant. She hardly ever left home due to tiredness and she was also very conscious of her appearance. Her life came to a halt and it almost shattered her confidence. She was not ever diagnosed with depression, but I would say there was a definitive negative impact on her mood.

- 14.If she had not had the infection, she would have been more involved with the upbringing of me and my brother; instead she was always sleeping and resting. She hardly spent any time with us. She would have been more social with her friends and would have gone out of the house more.
- 15.My mother was never given any treatment or medication for her symptoms aside from draining fluid from her stomach.
- 16.After my mother passed away, my father who was our breadwinner had to give up work as a Carpenter in order to care for my younger brother who was only ten at that time. This had a severe financial strain on our family. We had to sustain a living through social benefits. My father had to continue making mortgage payments and paying bills.
- 17.Losing our mother affected my brother substantially as he was only ten. In secondary school my brother did not perform very well in his GCSEs. He went on to college and dropped out of his course. I do not know if that was attributable to growing up in the absence of a mother, but I suspect it was.
- 18.At the time she passed away, my maternal grandparents were alive and I distinctly remember that my Nan cried for hours at her funeral. I now have children and my brother has a two year old child. They will never meet their Nan and my mother never got to enjoy her life with her grandchildren.
- 19.At the time I didn't realise what was happening. It did not feel real. One minute she was in QA and the next she was suddenly moved up to London. Now that I know about the contaminated blood scandal, I feel angry.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

- 20.They never knew what was wrong with my mother at the QA. When she was transferred to Kings College Hospital, a week before her death, they said she needed an urgent liver transplant. She was on the waiting list for one, but by then it was too late. If the doctors had identified the need for a liver transplant during her time at the QA, I believe my mother may still be here today.

21.No counselling or psychological support has ever been made available to me or my family in consequence of what happened. I believe that more care and support could have been given to my younger brother.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

22.I have not received any financial assistance from any institution as a result of what happened to my mother. I did not know that there was anything out there to assist us and to date no member of my family has received a single penny.

Section 8. Other Issues

23.I have not been involved in any campaigns.

Anonymity

24.I do not want to remain anonymous.

25.I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

24 3-19