

Witness Name: Marion Hawkins

Statement No.: WITN2844001

Exhibits: WITN2844002-10

Dated: 12th February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARION HAWKINS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 28th January 2019.

I, Marion Hawkins, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Marion Hawkins. My date of birth is GRO-C 1958. My address is GRO-C Edinburgh, GRO-C I live with my husband Brian Hawkins. We have lived here for 28 years. We have two children, Grant and Elaine, who both live away from home. I am a School Support Assistant at GRO-C Edinburgh. I intend to speak about my infection of hepatitis C through a blood transfusion, in particular the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and I and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

2. I received my blood transfusion on GRO-C 1987 after my son Grant was born.
3. Grant was born at the Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital at around 4am. It seemed to be an uneventful birth. I remember being taken up to the ward after Grant was born. Brian went home shortly afterwards to get some rest. It was later that morning I was taken out of the ward into surgery. At the time I did not know what was going on.
4. When I gave birth to Grant, I had a tear that was stitched back up by one of the doctors. I could feel that I was being sewn back up. There was an emergency that came into the hospital at the same time, to which the surgical team left me, and then returned a short while afterwards. I felt the stiches being sewn the anaesthetic had worn off by then.
5. It seems that it did not transpire until later on that I was still bleeding internally as a blood vessel was haemorrhaging. My blood pressure kept dropping, and the hospital decided that I needed surgery.
6. During the surgery I was given 3 units of blood. When I was in recovery a few days later, I was given another blood transfusion. I think I was again given 3 units of blood. I felt great after the second transfusion. There is a letter in my medical notes from the Consultant Obstetrician dated 11th February, 1997 that explains the procedure I had and mentions my transfusion. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2844002**.
7. I must have been quite ill, as my Dad only saw me once in the hospital and thought that I was not going to make it. He thought Brian was going to be a single parent. I did not realise just how bad I was.
8. I was in the hospital for a fortnight after the surgery whilst I recovered.

I was only allowed to leave because Brian was taking time off work. I still had to come into the hospital twice a day to get the dressings changed on my wound. A few days later, I stopped going into the hospital to have the dressings changed, and a district nurse came to me at the house to do it instead.

9. It was around about 13th December 1995 that I received a letter from the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service to advise me that I had been given a batch of infected blood that was contaminated with Hepatitis C. The letter said that this was not connected to the HIV virus. I had never heard of Hepatitis C before then. I produce a copy of this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2844003**.
10. Brian called his sister, and her husband who worked in a lab down south that worked on cancer treatments. It was Brian's brother-in-law that had to explain to us what Hepatitis C was.
11. **GRO-C** I got **GRO-C** bloods checked the next day at the Blood Transfusion Centre, Edinburgh. I think the Doctor that took **GRO-C** bloods was called Doctor Gilland but I can't be certain. I was called the day after when it was confirmed to me that I definitely had the Hepatitis C virus. I produce a letter from my medical notes dated 12th December, 1996 that confirms I was Hepatitis C positive and refer to it as **WITN2844004**. I was told to get my daughter Elaine checked at our GP surgery, **GRO-C**
GRO-C
12. When I received the letter telling me I had Hepatitis C, I phoned around all the hospitals to try and get my medical notes to find out how this had happened to me.

13. Our Doctor – Dr Gordon – went through the notes with us, and told me that the blood vessels between my bowel and uterus had burst, and that this was an accident. **(WITN2844002)**
14. I believed I was told I was positive for hepatitis C as soon as it was discovered although there is a note on my medical notes that says 'patient not yet aware'. I produce these notes in evidence and refer to them as **WITN2844005**.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. There have been no other infections other than hepatitis C and I've not been notified of anything else.

Section 4. Consent

16. Before I was taken into theatre after I gave birth to Grant, I was asked to sign a form. I remember signing it but cannot remember what was on the form.
17. As I was being rushed into surgery, I felt I had to sign the form, and could not wait on Brian to arrive at the hospital to discuss it with him.
18. I think I signed consent for going into surgery, at the time I was not sound of mind or body. I was lying down when I signed it.
19. I do not think I was given enough information by the NHS as to the Hepatitis C virus. We had to speak to Brian's brother-in-law about what it was in the first place.
20. I had to then gather information from magazines and papers as to what the virus was and what would happen to me.

Section 5. Impact

21. I remember applying for a job at **GRO-C** and in the medical part of the application form, I remember being told by someone helping me fill out the form to put "information available at interview". I did have to explain to them at the interview why I had put this down.
22. The first time I had a cut after I found out about my condition I sat down and cried. I thought my blood was bad. If I had a cut, I would tell people to go away whilst I dealt with it.
23. My toothbrush was separate from everyone else's in the house. I never had to take anything to extremes, but as a first aider I was aware of what I needed to do to avoid any issues.
24. Throughout the treatments I had for the Hepatitis C, I would have quite bad mood swings. I would feel low and some days I would feel like I could not be bothered. I still take anti-depressants up to this day. Since starting the treatment I have suffered with 'Brain Fog' and still do to this day. I will put things meant for the washing machine in the fridge. I was referred to a neurologist in 2015 who examined me and believed my memory loss and confusion were attributed to anxiety or early Alzheimer's disease. I was fine before I started the treatment for hepatitis and blame it on my condition. I produce a copy of a letter dated 9th January, 2015 that relates to my appointment with the neurologist and refer to it as **WITN2844006**.
25. I sought help from a private therapist who I saw every week but as she was my friend – **GRO-C** - it was not something I paid for. She was really good for me.
26. **GRO-C** was employed by the school I work at to come in and counsel children with eating disorders or bereavement. I found it easier to talk to her than anyone from the hospital. As I had been at the school for so long, I think she knew a lot about me, which helped the process.

27. I used to go to a support group called Solace at **GRO-C** which was mostly to help people with the HIV virus. I felt slightly out of place and do not think it was useful.
28. I am a great believer in organ donation – both of my kids have been organ donors since they were born. Now I have been infected with Hepatitis C, I am constantly left thinking if anyone would want my organs. I have never been told if I am prohibited from donating my organs.
29. One of Brian's brothers had AIDS. He stayed with us for a while – I tried to get him to have treatment at the Western General. But he just gave up and died. I was disappointed as I feel he did not try. **GRO-C** told me that it seemed I was getting better with my mental health at this point as I was becoming more concerned with things, whereas before I seemed a bit vacant.
30. I feel that I have been discriminated against in certain aspects of my life due to my diagnosis of Hepatitis C. For example I feel that when I have applied for certain holiday insurances, I feel when I disclosed my diagnosis to the person over the other side of the phone, I feel they would be looking down at me because of the negative connotations of people who would normally have Hepatitis C. We have never moved house, because I feel that if we needed to get another mortgage for another property, we would be discriminated against because of my Hepatitis C.
31. I have no life insurance. This is because the premium for the insurance is so high due to me having the pre-existing condition of Hepatitis C.
32. I'm not ashamed to have Hepatitis C – but I do tell people that I got it from a blood transfusion, so as people do not think that I got it from drug abuse.
33. There has been some disappointment I have experience within my own family that I would attribute to me having Hepatitis C. I used to be very

close to Brian's sister. During my second round of treatment, I remember Brian's sister jokingly said that she never came down to visit us as I would not be able to go shopping. I think that Brian and the kids could have done with the support – which disappointed me.

34. At my job, I have told the other teachers in the school that I have Hepatitis C. I introduced a system at the school to make sure that every member of staff updated their emergency contact details once a year. I also introduced a system that if any medical issues were to happen to any staff, there would be a sealed envelope in the safe in the office, which would be opened and would have instructions as to any health issues they may have. My envelope in the safe has all the instructions for any paramedics that may arrive so they are aware of my Hepatitis C.
35. I remember once that my son Grant said that he thought it was his fault that I had Hepatitis C as I had to have the blood transfusion when he was born. I felt sorry for him as it was obviously not his fault. He was young at the time when he said this, and he is aware now that it was not his fault.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

36. In the February or March of 1996, I was told I had endometriosis. I was told that either I was to be on medication for the rest of my life, or I could have a hysterectomy. I decided to have the hysterectomy.
37. I had a blood test not long after this, and was asked if I wanted to be considered for participating in a clinical trial for the treatment of Hepatitis C. In August 1997 I remember I went to see a Doctor at the Royal Infirmary; I assumed it was to start the treatment for the hepatitis. It was not to get the treatment, it was to discuss what treatments were available. I remember being very upset that I wasn't getting treatment

there and then. There is reference to this meeting and my feelings in my medical notes. I produce these letters in evidence and refer to them as **WITN2844007** and **WITN2844008**. I told the hospital that I did not want to be contacted again until they were ready to begin the treatment.

38. I went in for a liver biopsy on Grant's 10th birthday. I was told that my liver was enlarged.
39. I started on the trial not long after this – I think it was in 1997 - which was an injection of Interferon 3 times per week for 6 months, with 5 Ribavirin a day. The treatment was that new, that I had to pay for my prescription. When I went to get the prescriptions from my GP, I had to tell him what to write on the prescriptions as it was a new drug. I had to tell him what the drugs were for and how much I was to take.
40. At the time I worked in a crèche in Safeway – I was friends with the pharmacist, Kay, and I spoke to her about the medicines I was being prescribed. She knew what I needed to get, and would make sure my prescriptions were correct.
41. I had to keep the prescriptions in a sharps box on the top shelf of our fridge.
42. I had a dreadful fear of needles. I found it hard to inject myself with the Interferon at the beginning – however if I could not do it, I would have had to go to the hospital 3 times per week. It would maybe take me around half an hour to inject myself. Grant was around 10 at the time, and would have a coffee ready for me once I was finished injecting myself.
43. The first time I took the Interferon I shook uncontrollably. Brian had to sleep on the couch to give me a peaceful night sleep. I think it must have been my body getting used to the drug that made me shake like that.
44. After the 6 months of the treatment I had blood tests, and was told the

virus was lying dormant in my liver.

45. I was deemed a success of the trial, and there was a big write up in the Sunday Post about my story and how I had cleared the virus.
46. I went for blood tests every month after this, and around a year later I was told the virus was back.
47. I did not want to speak to anybody at this point. For 3 days I did not speak to anyone as I was in shock.
48. I started the second round of treatment shortly after this.
49. The second round of treatment was a larger dose of the Interferon and Ribavirin that lasted for a year.
50. With the second round of treatment, my hair started to fall out. The treatment seemed to be going well though, and I would still have the blood tests once a month at the Royal Infirmary. The trial doctor was called Marlo. She was a fantastic help to us. It was always her that we saw when I went in to get my bloods taken.
51. Around the July or August of that year whilst having the second round of treatment I remember having a very bad day. I was driving along the City Bypass and I wanted to crash my car. We went in the next day for our usual appointment with Marlo, who spotted instantly that I was having difficulty with my mental health. She told me to stop the medication, and was right on the phone to the Royal Infirmary for me to see a psychologist up there. There is a letter dated 11th May, 2004 on my medical notes that refer to my mood at the time. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2844009**.
52. I stopped for around 3 weeks, but finished the full dosage that was required. I had the last dose on my birthday. I was discharged not long after this.
53. It took me months to get back to my normal self after this. I was tired

and had no energy. The kids used to have to come shopping with me and we would get a taxi home. The kids would put the shopping away for me.

- 54. I was very picky with my food throughout the treatments – I could not stand the smell of some foods I would normally have eaten.
- 55. I never heard about any findings from the trial if the treatment was deemed a success.
- 56. The Hepatitis C has been lying dormant in my liver since the second round of treatment. I do regularly have blood tests to check up on this, and have sometimes had a liver function test. When I have the liver function tests I am always fearful that it may have come back.
- 57. I will never go through the treatment again. I have told Brian and the kids this.
- 58. I have heard now that the treatment lasts 12 weeks for anyone who has Hepatitis C.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

- 59. I was contacted by the Skipton Fund by letter, who advised me I may be eligible for an award under the scheme. I received £20,000.
- 60. I was then awarded £30,000 2 years ago from what I think was the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme.
- 61. I get £500 per month from I think the NHS – this was assessed as to how affected you are by the Hepatitis C in your work life. I think I was deemed moderately affected by it in terms of my work.
- 62. I feel that now they realise they have mucked up, they seem to be throwing money at you.

63. I faced no obstacles in applying for financial assistance that I'm aware of.
64. I can't remember any preconditions that were imposed.

Section 8. Other Issues

65. Thompsons Solicitors are recovering my medical records and I will be given an opportunity to review these.
66. When I found out I had been given contaminated blood I did contact my local MP Donald Gorrie. I know he wrote to the Minister of Health at the time. There are letters relating to this that I have given to Thompsons Solicitors. I produce them in evidence and refer to them as **WITN2844010**.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C: Hawkins

Dated

28th June 2019