

Witness Name: Rhiannon Jean Miller

Statement No: WITN3313001

Exhibits: None

Dated: May 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RHIANNON JEAN MILLER

I, Rhiannon Jean Miller will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Rhiannon Jean Miller and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C Essex, GRO-C My date of birth is GRO-C 1983. I have an older brother, William and younger sister, Fiona. I am married and we have a son. I work in the civil service.
2. I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 in respect of my late father, Dr William Spellman, born on the GRO-C
GRO-C 1943, who passed away on the 28 July 2009, aged 65, as a result of Hepatitis C. I am aware that my mother Irene Ruth Spellman has also provided a statement and will be giving oral evidence. My brother William Spellman and sister Fiona Birkett will also be giving witness evidence.

3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's full medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My father, William Spellman was a well-respected physics teacher, devoted Father, the best kind of person to have around with his delight in saying the unexpected, quietly not following the crowd. He was infected with Hepatitis C by a contaminated blood transfusion, which he received whilst being treated for Acute Myeloid Leukaemia in 1989 and 1990. I refer to my mother's witness statement for more information about this treatment.
5. I did not find out that he had been diagnosed with Hepatitis C until much later. This may have been when I was around 14 years old, which was also when I first became aware that he was abnormally tired.
6. My dad was subsequently diagnosed with renal failure in 2004, which meant he had to go on dialysis for the rest of his life. His health continued to fail and there was a sharp deterioration in the months leading up to his death, after years of weariness and intrusive medical interventions, which was devastating. He died on 28 July 2009, aged 65.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I do not believe that my dad contracted any other infection apart from Hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

8. I do not know if my dad was tested or treated without his knowledge.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

9. Hepatitis C put my dad in a nightmarish position, of dependency on his family and in particular his children. Worse, he saw his illness bring us enormous pain.
10. Stumbling around the house disorientated holding a kitchen knife, lying on a hospital bed staring at the ceiling or in a wheelchair in a busy corridor, handled clumsily by nurses who must have assumed he was decades older than he was, in his weak and confused state.
11. Manically scratching, dragging around swollen feet, (there was once talk of amputation but it never happened, thank God), his once brilliant appetite gone. My dad once asked me during a delirious episode to stand back in case he infected me. The water on his brain muddled his thoughts but this surely had root in a real fear.
12. From around the age of 14 I knew his tiredness wasn't normal. When we were small he had survived Leukaemia but a shadow remained. I thought it was that. My brother told me he had Hepatitis C, having opened a letter by mistake. We didn't speak about it. Dad only told us his diagnosis when his kidneys failed to the extent that he needed regular dialysis, which was when I was 21.
13. I remember the atmosphere after he told my younger sister, who had been most protected. He came downstairs and was restless, acknowledging '*the emotion of the past few days*' as we all came to terms with the new, less good life he was going to have. I hadn't expected or wanted him to say this, but it was comforting, looking back, that he felt he could.
14. '*Some people wouldn't be able to cope with what I cope with*', he said later, when things were much worse. This brought me up short too and occasionally still does.

15. He carried on as normal to a point bordering on idiotic. He spoke of the Italian Lakes but my mum and I took him on Eurostar to Bruges as a compromise. We carried him off the train but he somehow fell, his forehead smacking the platform as he landed. The worry about getting him to the hotel without further incident, the feeling of helplessness and unreality. His frailty and the awful bruising were a horrific inversion of family holidays of old; him casually hiring a car to drive us around Rome or a Haven holiday on the Isle of Wight where my sister and I spent long days in the pool and he long evenings detangling our hair.
16. I lived as a teenager uncertain for my dad's future but understanding he would not live to see major milestones. He contracted Hepatitis C from a life-saving blood transfusion. We were lucky he was here at all.
17. My best memories: choosing a bureau for him and his delight on receiving it because it came from us. Him occasionally reaching to absentmindedly twiddle my feet on the couch, calling me outside late one night to see a family of hedgehogs crossing the road, and one Christmas getting a metal detector, not from Santa but from him.
18. His great loves besides us: a roast potato eaten cold dipped in salt, a full glass of Boddington's bitter, a neat and tidy desk, a bed with sheets tucked tight, bacon with brown sauce and clothes smelling of oxygen from hanging on the line. He loved overhearing a drama at the next table in a restaurant, or a bit of celebrity tittle-tattle; although he would never admit it. We had that in common.
19. Things he said for good or bad turn over in my mind now and I wish I could open discussions again. I miss the completeness of our family and the sense of collusion with him over our strange rituals. I miss basking in the warmth of his obvious pride. He would surely have teased his grandson relentlessly.

20. In one of the last trips I made with him to the Royal Free Hospital, we sat outside to recuperate before the drive home and a young man next to us was fending off a wasp. When he left, Dad said '*people are charming, aren't they?*'

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

21. I do not know if he had difficulty accessing treatment for Hepatitis C.

22. I have not had any counselling and do not know whether it was offered to my dad.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

23. I am not aware of these details and refer to my mother's statement.

Section 8. Other Issues

24. Being at the end of life can give it a rose tint, but my dad could be surprisingly sentimental and tended to think the best of people. This included placing his trust in medical professionals. I felt initially uncomfortable about the inquiry because it felt vaguely disrespectful to question what I think he believed – that he was infected by mistake but in general the people in charge of his care were doing their best.

25. The truth must now be told, every detail be known, in the hope that our suffering was not for nothing and can never happen again.

Anonymity

26. I do not wish to remain anonymous and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

27. 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... 31.05.19