

Witness Name: Demos Papamichael

Statement No.: WITN0037001

Dated:

27/4/19

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEMOS PAPAMICHAEL

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27/4/19

I, Demos Papamichael, will say as follows: -

Introduction

1. My name is Demos Papamichael. My date of birth is GRO-C 1949 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired, widowed father of three. My eldest is Michael who was born in 1970 at Barnet maternity hospital. My second is Panos who was born at Hornsey maternity hospital in 1973 and my youngest is Marina who was born at North Middlesex hospital in 1978.
2. I intend to speak about Andoula (Andre) Papamichael's (my wife) infection with Hepatitis C (HCV). Her date of birth was GRO-C 1950. In particular, the nature of their illness, how the illness affected us, the treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together.

3. Throughout my statement I have tried to recollect certain dates, times and key trigger events in my life as references to ascertain when certain things happened. This has been difficult due to the passage of time therefore these dates should be viewed as an approximation where stated.

How Affected

4. It is my belief that Andre was infected with HCV in 1978 at North Middlesex Hospital after receiving a contaminated blood transfusion following childbirth of my youngest daughter Marina.

Background

5. I got married to Andre in 1969. Andre and I ran a fruit and veg (Grocery) shop. I would go to the market everyday whilst Andre would open the shop. Andre was very active and hard working; she was one of those women who never complained. She just got on with things. She would prepare food for the kids after work and even do grocery shopping at midnight. She never drank or smoked out of choice. She also never had any tattoos or piercings.
6. Andre and I had our first child Michael in 1970. When Michael was born my wife lost a lot of blood and had to have a transfusion. The same situation happened in 1973 following the birth of my second son, Panos.
7. Given Andre's medical history it was decided a doctor needed to be present during the delivery of my youngest, Marina. A midwife or nurse could not perform the delivery. This was all documented in her medical notes / paperwork. When it came to her birth, however, the hospital had lost all the paperwork. There was no doctor present and I was asked to help the nurse deliver Marina.

8. I saw Andre had started bleeding heavily shortly after the birth and I immediately flagged this to the nurse. I told her about the issues that had occurred on the previous childbirths and the need for transfusions. This caused some panic and confusion. The lack of paperwork meant they did not know her medical history or even her blood type. If they had this they would have known that a doctor needed to be present.
9. Once the alarm was raised the doctors came rushing in. They escorted me out. I was asked to sign some paperwork. I believe this was for the blood transfusion and something else – I cannot remember what else. From memory, we were not told about the risks associated with transfusion.
10. It took Andre a few days to start recovering. She was stable but not well on the second day. By the third day she was able to start talking. At this point a doctor came and sat next to her. The doctor told her “you have three kids, you should not try to have more kids because we were just able to save you. Next time you may not survive”. They then recommended that we do something to prevent us having kids again and reinforced the message that she would probably die if she has another child.
11. We went away once she was discharged and had a think. A few days later we went back and she had her fallopian tubes tied. After this procedure she had reoccurring problems every month. She would lose a lot of blood during her periods.
12. In 1996 Andre had a hysterectomy in North Middlesex hospital. She lost a lot of blood again. In 1998 they called everyone that had a hysterectomy carried out at the hospital to come back for a check up. I remember they didn't say what the check was for but said everything was okay.

13. After Andre's hysterectomy her periods became a lot worse and she started losing a lot of blood. She went back to the doctors a few times because she felt tired a lot. The doctors didn't do anything about it even though she went to hospital. She was anaemic and I recall her being prescribed iron / thalassemia tablets.
14. Andre was diabetic and had been taking insulin. As part of a routine check up for diabetes the nurse advised her to speak to her GP about a blood test. I remember that at this stage the appearance of her skin was a bit yellow. She visited the GP and was told that there may be something wrong with her liver. She was given a letter to visit the Royal Free Hospital for a blood test immediately. Following the blood test in 2003 she was told she had HCV.
15. The hospital (Royal Free) explained everything about the condition. They told her that she could not pass it on through kissing or having sex. It could only be transferred if you and the other person both have a cut. I believe we received proper advice – they looked after us. Andre was extra cautious and even started to wear gloves as a precaution when cooking to prevent any risk of passing on the infection to the family.
16. I don't think it was a specific doctor's fault but I feel we should have been told before. They may have known that Andre had HCV but failed to share it.
17. I remember Andre being angry when she found out about her condition. She was not angry with the doctors but the hospital for not telling her sooner given she had had multiple doctor appointments over the years.

Impact

18. Over the years Andre had been feeling more tired. She started struggling to get out of bed. Her stomach was swollen and she just was not the same person. She could not cook or clean and became incapable of doing a lot of things. She stopped partaking in family events and became progressively weaker. After 2003 she started deteriorating more rapidly.
19. Treatment for HCV involved Andre taking injections and tablets for a year. Andre had previously been very logical and was an advisor to other family members. After starting treatment she was very irritable and became withdrawn. She couldn't stand noise and did not even want to see her grandchildren. She became fed up with going to the hospital and I believe she accepted what was going to happen i.e. death – her mental state was not good.
20. Initially Andre tried to keep strong for everyone but this did not work. She had mood swings and would cry a lot – I believe at the thought of not being given the opportunity to see her grandchildren growing up.
21. During the summer Andre asked the hospital whether she could go on holiday to Cyprus. When she was in Cyprus she had an infection after injecting herself with insulin (she was diabetic). A private doctor prescribed her medication for this infection. Before she took the medicine though she spoke to the Royal Free to tell them the name of it and asked whether she could take it given she was being treated for HCV. They confirmed she could.
22. When she came back to England to have her routine three-month check they told her that because she had taken this medication this meant that she would need to restart the whole HCV treatment even though she was 75% finished. This made her depressed and eventually she was prescribed antidepressants.

23. At the next routine check up they did an x-ray to see the impact of HCV on her liver. This showed up a tumour. The doctor told them once there is a tumour there is no longer a chance to treat it. She was sent a letter saying she had between two weeks to a month to live – from memory this was not mentioned in the face-to-face consultation.
24. As soon as we got the letter I spoke to my brother-in-law who lives in Greece. He had a friend in Germany who is a prominent doctor – Nikolaos Zamboglou. I got all the medical records and forwarded them to him. The doctor said that she was not going to die and he could operate on her to remove the tumour. The doctor performed the surgery. I remember this being very expensive but I cannot remember the cost.
25. We came back to the UK and went to the Royal Free to tell them that we had, had surgery for the tumour. The lady doctor at the time reacted angrily and shouted “*why did you take her to Germany do you not trust us?*” My son explained that if you had been given this letter how would you have reacted and then handed the letter to the doctor. Once the doctor saw this she apologised. After this the care and everyone was good.
26. We had a follow up appointment in Germany in 2015. The tumours were completely gone and Andre did not need any further treatment or to come back for any further appointments. By this stage her HCV was clear too.
27. In 2016, Andre had a car accident; she was driving to collect her medication from the chemist. She blacked out. The pharmacy saw what happened and phoned an ambulance and our son. She was taken to hospital and kept for a day. Andre kept her medical notes on a card in her purse. I believe the hospital also phoned the Royal Free but I cannot say for sure. She was subsequently discharged.

28. A few days later, she started having pain. She went to the Royal Free and after diagnosing her they discovered her liver had enlarged and this had forced her kidneys to collapse. They tried to drain but were unable to help. She was then taken to the North Finchley hospice for her final days. I remember at this stage she had stopped opening her eyes.
29. Unbeknown to me at the time Andre had phoned Peter, the main funeral director in the Greek community, and told him that she was going to die and asked that she be buried in Cyprus. She had made all the arrangements with contacts in Cyprus. She even asked him to help his daughter do the necessary things. She did everything until the last day. Peter told me all of this after her death.
30. Shortly before her death, she called the children and told them of her assets and asked them whether they want a 1/3 split or how they want to divide it up. She was very precise on how she wanted her assets split.
31. Andre came from a really academic family and was very intelligent. She taught our daughter everything. We have six grandchildren and they really miss their grandmother. She was very close to the family.

Impact on me:

32. The whole situation affected me a lot – but I did not want to show it to protect Andre. Anything she asked for I agreed to it. Andre tried to be strong and please everyone. She didn't want to show the family how the condition was affecting her.
33. We tried to run the Grocery shop for as long as we could but in 2008 we had to shut and then sell the shop. This caused a big financial

impact on us and things we wanted to do like help the children with their marriages etc.

34. When she died I felt very lonely. I started to go to the cemetery everyday – even at night. I would just sit by her grave and speak to her even if it was midnight. I was constantly asking myself why. I went to see a priest who started to help me accept it.
35. I now spend a lot of my time at the church. I constantly feel down but the church keeps me going. It makes me feel part of the community and helps me understand that I cannot change anything and bring her back and accept what has happened.
36. When I found out how much it was affecting my daughter this made it worse for me. I now suffer from blood pressure and have diabetes. I take painkillers everyday – Tramadol. If I stop taking them I will end up shaking and it will be very bad. To be honest, I struggle to express my emotional feelings. I just try and carry on with life. I fell down the stairs and have had operations to recover including having pinning. I've potentially developed narcolepsy. Andre was my strength.
37. When Andre died we didn't want to tell people it was because of HCV. The community thought it was cancer and we kept it like that – initially even with extended family. The family only found out after we had to go to Germany for treatment.

Impact on my children

38. My eldest, Michael is a black cab driver. He is good at verbalising what he is thinking and how he is feeling. When Andre became ill he started to get angry. He thought I was not looking after her. GRO-C
GRO-C following the incident at the Royal Free when the lady doctor shouted him at because of Andre's treatment in Germany. Michael never wanted to really get

involved in the hospital appointments after this and became withdrawn. I believe this was around 2010.

39. My second, Panos is a photographer. He does not really express himself. He does not want to talk about it and will change the topic if anything about Andre comes up. He has not come to terms with what has happened.
40. I believe my youngest, Marina suffers the worst. She lives in Cyprus and has two daughters. She a teacher and has a busy life with her job and family. She still finds time to visit Andre's grave nearly everyday. Sometimes she will get really upset and not go for a month though.
41. She feels responsible and thinks it was her fault that Andre died. She has, in my opinion, GRO-C but does not want to go to the doctor. I found out the issues through my son in law. Marina used to be focused and logical but now she has GRO-C She doesn't bake or do the things she used to enjoy doing.

Treatment/Care/Support

42. Overall I thought the treatment was fair.
43. I remember Andre was offered counselling. I believe she was also offered help with duties in the house just before she went into the hospice. She turned this down though because I was around to help out.

Financial Assistance

44. I remember Andre had funds from Caxton or Skipton when she was still alive. I believe she was given two lump sum payments of around £10k. This turned into a monthly payment since we sold the shop.

45. Andre also received two payments – one to cover the mortgage interest payments and one for her living. They cut off both payments when she died.
46. I currently get £166.67 from EBISS but I am appealing the amount. I also get the state pension. The income I get is not enough to cover my costs so my family help out. I now live with my son in our former matrimonial home – it was all divided up when Andre died.

Other Issues

47. I don't blame the doctors it was the authorities that did this to Andre. I hope this means they won't do this again in the future. I want them to do something to help the people affected as part of this tragedy.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated 27/4/19