

Witness Name: NICOLA SARA CHRISTIE

Statement No: WITN0811001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: APRIL 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF NICOLA SARA CHRISTIE

I, NICOLA SARA CHRISTIE will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Mrs Nicola Sara Christie (nee' Marsden). My address is GRO-C
GRO-C Northern Ireland. My date of
birth is GRO-C 1982.

2. I live with my husband Steven Christie, an electrical engineer. I work in a museum as a visitor guide and discovery facilitator which mainly involves teaching children lessons in the discovery area.

Section 2. How infected

3. I make this statement in relation to my Dad, William Trevor Marsden, who was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of being given contaminated blood products. My Dad is providing a statement to the inquiry and his witness number is WITN1372001.

4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my Dad's full medical records. If and in so far as we have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are exhibited to my Dad's statement.
5. My Dad has Haemophilia B.
6. I believe my Dad was contaminated with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving Factor IX blood products. I don't know any further detail about the products he received.
7. In respect of where, when and by who he was treated, the information and advice he received about the risk of infection and how he found out he had been infected, I refer to my Dad's witness statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. In around 2006, my Dad received a letter informing him that he had received blood products which had come from a pool which included a donor who had subsequently died and had been identified as having vCJD. He was informed that the infection had an incubation period of fourteen years and that if it presented itself, he would have thirteen months to live. This has been enormous source of worry and stress for my family and continues to be.

Section 4. Consent

9. I refer to my Dad's statement as I am unable to comment on this.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

10. I recall that my Dad started appearing unwell in around 1989. Sometimes he would be unwell for months, but he would try to hide his symptoms and work around it. He was not told of his Hepatitis C diagnosis until 1996 and, until that point, he did not know what was wrong with him.

11. The 1990s were a terrible time for my Dad. As a child, I can remember him sat in a chair and gazing blankly out the window. He never spoke about his feelings, like a typical farmer. I had never seen him looking so lost. I was very worried about his state of mind. I was fearful that my Dad was suicidal, as he had been depressed for such a long time and because he shut himself off from us. It made it hard to know if or when he would do something terrible. This was extremely frightening as a child.
12. My Dad had a lot of worries that he bottled inside. My Dad was the kind of person who always remained active and hardly ever sat down. He would wake up at early hours of the morning and work on the farm till late at night. After his diagnosis, it was like there was a dark cloud hanging over him. He became helpless, unable to do anything and was physically worn down. He was very gaunt and fatigued and could no longer keep up with the maintenance of the farm. This worsened his depression as when he couldn't do things for himself, he felt terrible.
13. He tried doing as much as he could as farming was his passion and driving force and he wanted to remain as independent as possible, but as time went on, he became extremely demotivated and felt that there was not much to live for. At that point in time, he did not know the cause of his symptoms. Hepatitis is a hidden disease and as they didn't know otherwise, my Dad's parents thought he was being lazy.
14. When my Dad received the vCJD letter, it affected him terribly. At that point he had already lived with Hepatitis for decades and because he was so independent, the possibility of having another disease, and a particularly unpleasant one at that, was almost like the last straw for him. It must be at the back of his mind constantly, as it is certainly in the back of ours.
15. If the infection ever does present itself, I am sure that he has a plan in place to kill himself. There are railway tracks nearby, and living on a farm, we possess shot guns so there would be several ways for him to commit suicide.

16. There was a family who lived near us and the eight year old daughter found her Dad dead. Nobody suspected anything to indicate he was suicidal and I feared that my Dad would die in the same way. I know that my Dad would not be able to go through vCJD. It is very difficult to live with these thoughts.
17. As a result of his Hepatitis C, my Dad experienced liver damage. Other viruses such as the flu, were also much worse for my Dad. I also feel that my Dad's injuries and wounds take longer to heal.
18. After enduring severe hardship and catastrophic symptoms, my Dad has cleared his Hepatitis C infection. However, the damage had been done. My Dad never managed to return to farming and he still gets cold and fatigued easily.
19. I refer to my Dad's statement regarding the treatment he received. I believe he had two or three courses of Interferon treatment between the years of 1996 and 2006. It was in 2007 that he cleared his infection.
20. I refer to my Dad's witness statement regarding any difficulties he faced in obtaining treatment.
21. I cannot say whether there are treatments which I consider ought to have been (but were not) made available to my Dad.
22. I specifically remember the treatment my Dad had in the 1990's as that had the most awful impact on him and made him very sick. It drained him of all his strength. He always felt cold and experienced uncontrollable shivering. He was bedridden and my mother would have to nurse him, which was hard to witness, as he had been such an independent and physically capable man before he became unwell.
23. Again, his depression worsened as he was even more unable to work. My mother, my siblings and I had to assume his farming responsibilities. He deteriorated rapidly and became a completely different man to who he used to

be. His depression worsened and he was irritated by the fact that he was physically unable to do anything.

24. My Dad viewed his manhood as doing things and providing for his family, so when he became sick it emasculated him. It felt like he was unwell for a very long time due to his treatment when I was a child.

25. Before receiving treatment in 2006 my Dad said that he had been told that the treatment would either clear his infection or would accelerate it. My Dad decided to take the risk, but we did not know if he would make it.

26. I do not know whether my Dad's infection impacted his treatment for any other conditions. However, I would like to comment that in the years when my Dad was not aware that he was infected, he would have had dental care and may have unknowingly caused his infection to pass to the dentist or other patients. The equipment used may not have been sterilised or destroyed in the way it would be had the dentist known about the infection.

27. Before he became unwell, my Dad used to enjoy certain social events. In our community, they hosted annual competitions in events such as tossing hay bails over a rope that progressively got higher. It would be a demonstration of physical strength, which my Dad could have participated in. However, once he became unwell, he could not engage in such activities, as he was physically unable to. We hold many family gatherings and these often involve physical activities, but my Dad is not able to join in with this.

28. Before my Dad was unwell he used to enjoy motorbike riding and participating in races. He wasn't able to do this for a long time due to the effects of his infection. This was a major thing for him. The little he has been able to do, he now finds very draining.

29. As a family, we never discuss my Dad's infection.

30. I struggle with talking about my Dad's infection as I find it very emotional. During the 1990s, the lowest point for my Dad, I would think to myself that I

could wake up one day and not have a Dad. The fact that there was nothing I could do about it and couldn't talk to anyone about it made it harder. We endured everything in silence.

31. When my Dad was in dark moods he wouldn't talk to us. The effect of the treatment on my Dad was hard for us to watch. I would describe it as watching my Dad die in front of me.

32. The thought that my Dad could harm himself one day without me getting the chance to say goodbye terrified me.

33. My sisters, particularly Lucy and I, were like carers for our Dad at a very young age. I am the oldest child, so I remember the worst parts of watching Dad live through the infection. I would not wish that upon anyone.

34. When I was sixteen, I told my first boyfriend that my Dad had Haemophilia and Hepatitis C. I also told him that I was a Haemophilia carrier. He was okay with it as he didn't really understand what it meant. I told him, as I felt that if the relationship was going to go somewhere, he deserved to know. However, one day I visited his house and his mother said, "I hope you know what you are doing." My boyfriend had told his mother about my Dad's Hepatitis C. It was hurtful to be treated like that, almost as though I was infected, but I learnt that I should keep my Dad's infection a secret and that not everyone would be understanding.

35. Because of this, I waited a very long time before telling my current husband about my Dad's Haemophilia and infection and the fact that I am a carrier. Thankfully, he was understanding. Due to my past experience, I am careful of who I talk to about my Dad's infection.

36. I realised that people saw Haemophilia as being strongly associated with AIDS. People should have been educated and awareness should have been raised on these issues. We should not have had to explain the entire story to people to make them understand that my Dad was infected through no fault of his own.

37. My mother sheltered my three siblings and I as much as she possibly could. When I was growing up, if anything happened to my Dad, such as an accident, or if he was experiencing severe symptoms, I would try to help him, but my mother would intervene and shout at me to stay away. She was afraid that I would become infected.
38. She ensured that my siblings and I knew that we had to stay clear of his toothbrush. Unfortunately, farmers can sustain a lot of injuries and my Dad sustained several whilst he was still working. Sometimes we would have to help him ourselves, especially if our mother was at work.
39. My mother once informed me that if there were two drops of blood on the table, one infected with HIV and the other which Hepatitis C, and you bleached them both, the HIV would disappear in its entirety, whereas the Hepatitis C would remain as would the threat of contamination.
40. I once read that people under the age of 21 were able to remove half a liver and it would regrow, so I offered my Dad half of my liver. He said no and this made me very angry and upset, but he did not want to risk me getting the virus. He was stubborn and always tried to protect me.
41. What happened to my Dad had an impact on my decision about having children. I am the oldest of thirteen cousins and the last female amongst them to have a child. When I was seven, my mother told me that I was a carrier, although at the time I didn't understand it. Only after watching my Dad go through treatment did I realise that, if I had a boy, he could go through the same thing.
42. I believe that there is always the risk of getting contaminated blood. I have lost faith in the medical profession, due to my Dad being infected by contaminated blood products. Recently, on Panorama I saw a girl who was given infected blood. I grew concerned about putting my child through that. I didn't want to pass on the Haemophilia and was afraid that my son could get an infection via contaminated blood. In the end, I decided I did not want to go through the anxiety of having children due to potential risk of having a son with

Haemophilia. I told my husband this prior to us getting married and he was ok with it.

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GRO-C	my husband and I decided to try for a baby naturally and I am currently pregnant. I was apprehensive, but eventually decided it was better to try for a baby than not to. I am due to find out the gender of my child, and if it is a boy, there is a 50-50 chance he will be born a Haemophiliac.

45.

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46. In 2013, I took tablets for anxiety and depression for about a year. I had a series of anxiety and panic attacks. I kept my emotions bottled up and they built up to a point where I burst. I still experience panic attacks, although not as frequently as I did before therapy.

47. I also attended Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions from June to August 2013 for 8-12 weeks. From November 2017 – February 2018, I attended some further sessions of CBT regarding several issues, including

GRO-C	my associated fears, such as having a child with Haemophilia
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who would be at risk of being given contaminated blood and suffering infections.

48. I found the CBT helpful and realised how significant the impact of my father's infection had been on me. I was disaster planning and fortune telling and my mind would run off into a stream of paranoia. I still struggle, but less so.

49. As I have mentioned, my siblings and I became our Dad's carers. Even before my Dad's diagnosis, from the age of seven, I was helping on the farm, cleaning out stables and feeding the animals. There were things my siblings and I were unable to do, such as extra curricular activities. I had an interest in hockey, but my school team would practice after school whilst I had to return home before sunset to the farm. That is because it was still light outside. Even if I had stayed behind for hockey, if my Dad's condition was bad, there would be no one to pick me up afterwards. My home situation and my commitments with the farm restricted me. We had to ensure that someone was there to care for Dad. I would get anxiety that if someone wasn't there, something bad could happen to him. In consequence, none of us had a normal childhood, and today, even though I am only thirty six, I feel like I am already a grandma in my mind. As a child, I was caring not only for my Dad, but also for my younger siblings when my mum was at work or caring for my Dad.

50. My mother kept to herself a lot. Unless we asked, she wouldn't talk about my Dad. When she did talk to us about my Dad's health, she would get upset and angry about what had happened to him and the attitude of the hospital whenever she tried to seek advice or help from them. They thought she was being difficult, when in fact it was the other way around.

51. My parents are very strong people. Without my mum's encouragement my Dad may not have had treatment. My Dad may have given up as he was in such a bad way, that he might have felt there was no point continuing. My sisters are annoyed about how we were treated, and I am angry about what happened. We have to move on and are grateful that he is still here. If he had given up, or the situation had been worse than it was, I cannot imagine how

difficult it would have been for me and my family. We are blessed that we did not lose him and we try to be positive and do our best as a family.

52. Despite my childhood, I managed to go to university and complete a degree. I also attempted a Masters in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, but that was around the time that my Dad received the vCJD letter, which made the family so anxious. My Dad became so depressed. Because of the strain of the news that my Dad had potentially been infected with vCJD, I did not finish my dissertation. It did not seem important in comparison to my Dad's health. I therefore only qualified with a PGD, rather than with an MA. vCJD was not a matter to be taken lightly and I was so scared it would take my Dad's life. I felt immobilised at that time.
53. Depression hit me later on in life when I was working. I tried my best to remain professional during working hours, but depression impacted me at times when I least expected it. My job in particular requires me to perform in front of the public and deliver the tour programmes. I have to adopt a lively, positive and upbeat personality when working with the public, which was a big pressure for me when I was depressed.
54. I had to take time off work due to anxiety and depression. Due to me taking a lot of sick leave, my managers came down hard on me, but after discussing it with my union, they told me not to worry. Nevertheless I remain conscious of my attendance today.
55. Since my mother tried not to burden us, I cannot comment on the extent of the financial impact of my Dad's infection on our family. I was, however, aware that there was financial pressure. One Christmas we were not given any presents. I later learnt that my mother had written down the things she wanted to give us, but hadn't been able to.
56. Another example is when my brother Sam was born in 1992. On his birthday, over the years, my mother struggled to buy him presents. Even at a young age, Sam would tell our mum that he didn't need presents. My mum would still try her best, but my brother noticed that we couldn't afford things like that.

57. It was important to our parents that we received the best quality of life they could possibly give us, but there have been times I can remember, particularly when I was very young, that my family struggled to put food on the table. During it all, no assistance was offered to us by anybody. Our financial situation since then fluctuated, which also correlated with the highs and lows of farming.

58. My Dad sold some of his farm land due to financial pressures at one point.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

59. Any kind of support was extremely difficult for our family to obtain. I cannot recall our family receiving any support from anyone. I remember my mother getting very angry and frustrated from fighting with the medical professionals.

60. I actively sought CBT in 2017, specifically about my Dad's Haemophilia/Hepatitis C, years after my Dad's infection. I went to the GP when I could no longer take any more silence on the issue.

61. I do not know if my Dad has been offered any counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

62. I refer to my Dad's statements in relation to any financial assistance he may have received.

63. Personally I have never received any financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

64. My Dad's cousin Nigel also suffered from Haemophilia B and he died in his late thirties from AIDS as a result of being given contaminated blood. At his funeral people asked about the cause of his death, but it was very secretive. It

angers me to think that people like my Dad have been stigmatised for a condition they contracted through no fault of their own.

65. The impact my Dad's infection has had on my family has been overwhelming. It is amazing that as a family we still do not talk about what happened.
66. We used to go on holidays as a family together, but after my Dad was diagnosed with Hepatitis C he could no longer get travel insurance. Anytime we would go away, he would be anxious and therefore we hardly ever travelled.
67. For my parents 25th wedding anniversary, they went to Canada and risked going without travel insurance as the premiums were far too high in light of my Dad's health. Whilst abroad, he had issues with his appendix and had to return home without getting a refund.
68. I seek justice for my Dad and my family. I do not believe that the victims of the contaminated blood scandal and their families have been taken seriously and I do not feel that we have the sympathy of those in power. In the Panorama documentary, the attitude of those who had the power to do something but didn't was shocking. It made me feel very angry. I feel that certain people have been waiting for infected Haemophiliacs to die.
69. Hepatitis C stole my Dad from me for a long time, when he became depressed, dark and irritable. It stole my childhood. I became not only a carer to my Dad, but a watcher as well. No child should have to worry about finding their parent dead or having to wake up to find that they have gone.
70. Hepatitis C stole a happier version of my life with less stress and anxiety, which I will now not experience.
71. My Dad has had to fight to discover what happened to him and what it was he was infected with. He has had to fight the public perception that his infection was his own fault. He is now fighting for justice. The public Inquiry is our last hope of justice.

Anonymity

72. I do not wish to be anonymous. I am prepared 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..... 4 April 2019