

Witness Name: Kim Oakley
Statement No.: WITN1953001
Exhibits: WITN1953002-
WITN1953004
Dated: 8 August 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KIM OAKLEY

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Kim Oakley and my date of birth is GRO-C 1959. My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I have two brothers (one of whom has died), two sons and a grandson. I currently live with my oldest son. I work as a nurse.

Section 2. How Affected

3. I am writing this statement on behalf of my late mother Mary Violet Bray, who was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) from a blood transfusion she received during a hysterectomy in the late 1960s or early 1970s. I do not know which hospital performed the operation. I understand that the

transfusion was either performed during the operation or after the operation while she was still in hospital.

4. I believe that the operation may have occurred in the late 1960s because I was born in 1959 and I was a fairly young child when it happened. I remember that our dad looked after us while our mum was in hospital and for a short period afterward, when she was sent to a convalescent home.
5. I do not know if any advice was given to my mother about the risks of a blood transfusion before her operation. I would assume that she signed a consent form but I do not know what information was provided.
6. My mother died on 25 May 1990, aged 57, as a result of oesophageal varices and bronchopneumonia arising out of the HCV. **(WITN1953002)**.
7. My mother was infected with HCV only.
8. In the mid to late 1970s she had some blood tests at Queen Mary Hospital in Roehampton and was diagnosed with angina. I believe I was 16 or 17 at the time, because I remember going with her to the hospital. I remember us laughing about the fact that we had walked to the cardiology department, but once it was determined that she had angina, they insisted on using a wheelchair to take her to a different department for further testing.
9. My mum told me in the early 1980s that she had found out she tested positive for HCV. I do not know how or when she was told of her infection. I have not been able to obtain medical records for my mother other than those relating to her admittance to hospital just before her death in 1990, so there is no record of her HCV testing or diagnosis. However there is a letter from her consultant in 1990 noting that in 1982 she had a liver biopsy which showed "histological features of chronic active hepatitis without cirrhosis". **(WITN1953003)**.

10. I remember that she was surprised to hear that she had HCV because she didn't drink or take drugs and was not promiscuous. She was concerned that people would think she was a heavy drinker.
11. Her doctor did not tell her how she had contracted the infection. I had started working as a nurse in 1979, so I knew a bit about HCV and eventually surmised and told my mum that, given the lack of risk factors in her lifestyle, I thought she had probably contracted it from her blood transfusion.
12. Over the years my mum went for many liver biopsies and would come back and discuss the appointments with me. She did say that the doctors eventually told her she had gotten the HCV from a blood transfusion.
13. I do not believe my mum was given adequate information about how to manage the infection and how it would progress. I remember that she developed varices in her oesophagus, and remarked to me that she was surprised as she didn't know you could get them there. It was clear that she had not been told at the time of diagnosis that that this was a symptom she could expect to develop if the virus progressed, nor had she been told, once she did develop the varices, that it was linked to her HCV.
14. My father was not given any information either about my mother's prognosis.
15. I do not believe my mum was given any information about the risks of infecting other people.
16. I do believe my mum was kept in the dark about her infection, its cause and what to expect going forward. However, my mum was not the type of person to question a doctor. She was of an era when people had great respect for doctors and took everything they said as God's word. Because my mother was so trusting of doctors, I believe it was their

responsibility to give her all the information she needed so that she would not be left wondering about what would happen next or how to cope with her symptoms, but they did not do this.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. I do not believe my mother was infected with anything other than HCV as a result of her transfusion. It is noted in her hospital records that she tested negative for Hepatitis B. (WITN1953003).

Section 4. Consent

18. I do not believe my mum was treated without her consent. I can't fault the hospital's care of her. She may not have been told of the risks of getting a transfusion whilst in the operating theatre because she was under general anaesthesia.
19. It wouldn't have been standard practice to ask her specifically if she consented to having a transfusion beforehand. She would have signed a form beforehand saying that she consented to the operation generally, but the doctors wouldn't have known at that point that she needed a transfusion.

Section 5. Impact

20. As a result of the HCV my mother developed oesophageal varices. She was under the care of a Dr Barnardo at Queen Mary's Hospital in Roehampton for many years. During the intervening years between diagnosis and death, she had numerous hospital appointments and admissions, during which she had many liver biopsies.
21. A liver biopsy in 1982 confirmed she had abnormal liver function but not yet cirrhosis, and she was given prednisolone and azathioprine to

manage her symptoms. In 1988 the azathioprine was ceased and another biopsy showed 'active piece-meal necrosis but still no cirrhosis'.
(WITN1953003).

22. She developed ascites, and was given prednisolone when she had a flare up. During the time leading up to her final hospital admission she had severe ascites.
23. She did not have any mental symptoms that I was aware of.
24. My mother's care was just maintenance and monitoring of her symptoms and administering medication to help with the symptoms where possible, as there was no treatment available for HCV at the time.
25. She was admitted to Queen Mary's Hospital during Easter 1990 when she had been vomiting blood. By that time she had started to look very poorly. She was very weary, very tired. She wasn't herself. She used to wear a lot of yellow, which would detract from the yellowness of her skin, but her skin was tinged with yellow from the late 80s.
26. I rang the ward early on the following Monday after her admission at about 8:00am. They had been trying to get in contact with my father but he was at work. The question I was asked was "are you a relative" which rang alarm bells to me as I knew something must have been wrong. Being a qualified nurse, albeit not practising at that time, my thought was that the varices had ruptured. This was in fact the case and my mum had been transferred to ICU in the hospital.
27. I had to contact my father and explain what happened. I then went to the hospital. My mum was in ICU sedated with a Sengstaken tube in, which was putting pressure on the varices in an effort to stop the haemorrhage. When the varices ruptured my mother's oesophagus was ruptured as well. She must have been in pain, and terrified at the sight of the projectile blood.

28. On 3-May 1990 my mum was transferred to the ICU at St George's Hospital, Blackshaw Road, Tooting. My brother witnessed the transfer from Queen Mary's to the ambulance and his words to me were "she looks dead". It was a very distressing time for us all.
29. After she was transferred to St George's, the doctors there mentioned that she would need a liver transplant. I said, "she's too ill for that, why weren't you talking about that years ago?" They had no answer for me. At that stage mum had ruptured her oesophagus and was in no fit state to go through a major surgery, so to mention a liver transplant at that stage was totally irrelevant. She wouldn't have been able to cope with the surgery. I was angry that this had not been mentioned earlier when her body would have been able to cope with a transplant, as this could have saved her. There is conflicting information in her medical records about this as well. It is noted in a letter from Queen Mary's Hospital to St George's Hospital from 23 April 1990 that she "has a relatively good outlook in the medium term. She would obviously be a candidate for liver transplantation in the future (WITN1953003);" however, handwritten notes from that same date state "relatives (husband and daughter) informed of poor prognosis". (WITN1953004).
30. I regularly visited her in hospital, while she was in various stages of consciousness. On Sunday 20th May I spent most of the day with her. At this time she was conscious and had a tracheotomy. My mum didn't use bad language but, as a nurse came to give her some mouth care, she mouthed the F word. I was shocked and asked did she really say what I thought she did, and she nodded yes. She then went on to mouth that she wanted to go home. I explained that this wasn't possible. We spent time together and I told her that I and all of us loved her. We spoke about personal things and she asked me to look after my dad. When I left I was extremely upset and did not recognise my brother as he flashed his car lights at me in the car park. After his visit with mum he rang and I explained that my feeling was she was going to die.

31. When I then visited on Tuesday 22nd May she was not conscious and I spoke to her telling her again that we all loved her and we wanted her to stay but if she needed to go she could. I told her I would look out for my dad. It was a very painful conversation. I visited on the Thursday and at some point she was put on a ventilator and on Friday, 25th May 1990, we were called to her bedside in the afternoon when the discussion was had and the ventilator was switched off.
32. My mum was the glue that bound family and friends together. She was full of life. My parents had had the same group of friends – five couples – since they were teenagers, and we were all like an extended family. The couples would go on holiday together, and my mum would always organise parties at the local hall. Someone would always be asking “when’s Mary doing another party?” At her funeral there was standing room only as she was much loved. However, over the years, as a result of her declining health she had become less vibrant. She would stop going away on weekends, and lost her zest for life.
33. She was not perfect by any stretch of the imagination but a woman of compassion and principles. She was firm but fair and, together with my dad, provided a warm, stable and protected family unit.
34. She was also my friend. I could discuss anything with her and, although she may have not approved, she was not judgmental. My brothers and I had a happy upbringing doing normal stuff. Holidays at the seaside in a caravan, picnics with the same group of friends my parents had for most of their lives. Family celebrations. We were close. When my marriage was faltering in the 1980s my mum gave words of wisdom GRO-C
GRO-C My husband and I decided to work at our marriage. Unfortunately GRO-C
GRO-C we parted. My mum was a great support during this time. We holidayed with my children and stayed with my parents regularly.

35. During this time I was evicted GRO-C
GRO-C and me and my boys, aged 18 months and 3 years, were placed into bed and breakfast accommodation. The stability I received from both of my parents during this period enabled me to get on my own 2 feet again, return to work and provide a home for my children who are now 35 and 32 years. I've had to live through some difficult times, and through the support from my mum I got back on my feet again. Now, for all that I've achieved, from being a State Enrolled Nurse in 1979 to being an operating theatre manager today, my mum has not seen any of that. She has not been able to take part in any of the joyful things.
36. My mother's death was GRO-C after my 31st birthday. I was divorced and had 2 very young children at the time (aged 3 and 5) and had to get on with life. I didn't have the luxury of grief. During the course of the last 29 years I have missed her and am still missing her. She never really got to know my children. She was a rock through life's events and believe me there have been some.
37. I became depressed and had medication in the 1990s, although it didn't suit me so I stopped taking them. I pulled myself up and became the woman she would have been proud of. We as a family never really got over it and, although I kept my promise and looked out for my dad, we were never really the same. I moved my father to be nearer me and my boys as I became the child most involved with him. My boys, who are now 32 and 35, loved him and had a brilliant relationship with him. I have a grandson who my mum would have loved to bits.
38. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013 and had brilliant support from friends, but what I really wanted was my mum. When I was having my cancer treatment, it wasn't easy, I had lots of things go wrong, and I wanted my mum and my mum wasn't there. At one point during the course of my treatment, I needed a blood transfusion, which was very difficult for me to go ahead with due to the association that had with my mum. During this time my brother died in unfortunate circumstances,

suicide, in between my first and second chemotherapy sessions. I had to concentrate on getting through my treatment and subsequently six months after my return to work I had a breakdown. I accessed talking therapies and the lack of my having grieved the loss of my mother and brother was cited as part of the problem. It was cathartic. I remain on antidepressants. So losing my mum, aged 57, was life changing and remains to this day a loss that I don't think you get over.

39. My mum did not experience much of a stigma from other people in the community around her having HCV. However, she was aware of it in her mind as a disease that affects people who drink and do drugs, and was always concerned that people would think of her this way. I think this was more of an internal worry for her than something she experienced from others.
40. My father had known my mother since they were teenagers, and he loved her to bits. He had met her in a youth club in the late 1940s and said to his friend, "that's the woman I'm going to marry." He loved her to bits. He was there for her and a good dad and husband, but he mostly provided moral support rather than helping with her physical care. He is of a different era and in his mind a woman did the cleaning, the cooking, and the caring.
41. Because my father wasn't as intimately involved with my mother's illness, I don't think he realised how ill she actually was. She was awfully young (57) when she went into Queen Mary's after vomiting blood, and when I contacted him to let him know what had happened, he didn't seem to realise the gravity of the situation or the bleakness of what was going to happen until a few days before she died. He felt as long as she was alive, it was fine.
42. When she died, my dad withdrew into himself GRO-C
GRO-C I lived in GRO-C and he lived in GRO-C, and I used to go and visit him once a week to do shopping. Very often I would walk in and it would be deadly quiet. I would call out and walk up to his bedroom

and open the door, and just see this mound in the bed. This would be at about 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I would look to see if he was still breathing because I was unsure whether he was still alive.

GRO-C

GRO-C

43. My middle brother also suffered with depression. He was a fireman and had a breakdown, some of which can be attributed to mum's death. He suffered quite badly and in the end committed suicide. We were very close; there were only two years between us, and we were on the same wavelength. His death, which happened while I was also undergoing chemo, was very hard for me.
44. My eldest brother Mark is very different to my other brother and me. We have not really communicated much over the last few years, however I contacted him several months ago just to let him know that I had put Mum's case to the inquiry. He was shocked to hear that she had gotten HCV through a blood transfusion. He had also had HCV but as far as I know he has been successfully treated at Kings College Hospital. He was diagnosed after Mum's death and believes he may have contracted it from her.
45. My mum's infection did not have a significant effect on her work except that she became increasingly tired, less able and vibrant. It also shortened her life expectancy. Her siblings either died in their early 80s or are still with us. She worked as a clerical worker for BT for most of her working life, and continued to work until her final hospital admission in 1990.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

46. I do not believe my mother faced any obstacles in obtaining medical or any other treatment as a result of having HCV.

47. I do wish that my mother had been offered a liver transplant earlier at a time when she was strong enough to receive one, as this may have prevented her from going into liver failure.
48. My mother never underwent any counselling. I do not believe any was ever offered to her in connection with her HCV.
49. I had a breakdown after my treatment for cancer in 2013, and I ended up going to see a counsellor. We discussed my mother's death, the fact I hadn't properly grieved and my brother's suicide. I was prescribed anti-depressants which I am still taking.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

50. My mum did not receive any financial assistance in connection with her HCV. She didn't know this was available to her.
51. I have not applied for any financial assistance in connection with my mother's HCV.

Section 8. Other Issues

52. It wasn't until this Inquiry came along that I thought, my mum deserves answers. She had her blood transfusion in good faith, and she had no reason to doubt the doctors who treated her. The attitude that they had toward her infection was that it was "just one of those things", and she trusted them. As a result, she never would have thought that there was anyone to blame. But I know now that that's not true, it's not just one of those things and I want to find out who was responsible.
53. I would like to know if she did receive contaminated blood, which I'm sure she did. I would like to know why it's been kept under wraps for as long

as it has been. I would like an apology and acknowledgment that they denied it for so long and tried to brush it under the carpet.

54. I am not sure if my mum's doctors were intentionally withholding information from her, but I do think she wasn't given the full picture of what was happening. I don't think she was given the prognosis of how things would go or how things could go.
55. I have not seen my mum's medical records but I understand my solicitors have received some records from St George's Hospital.
56. I do not believe my mum was ever treated poorly as someone who had contracted HCV by any professionals. The people treating her took universal precautions and were professional.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed ...

GRO-C

Dated 8 August 2019.....