Witness Name: Lady Gillian Pedelty
Statement No.: WITN0721001
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 28th March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF Lady Gillian Pedelty

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 8th January 2019.

I, Lady Gillian Pedelty, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Lady Gillian Pedelty. My date of birth is GRO-C 1955 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I have one daughter, Melanie. I am retired and live with my husband David. I intend to speak about how I was infected with Hepatitis B (HBV) through a blood transfusion. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it has had on my life.

Section 2. How Infected

2. Around the late 1960's my Father, who was a sergeant in the RAF, was stationed in GRO-C. It was in GRO-C that I

underwent an operation and needed a transfusion. I did not find out about the HBV until I was pregnant with my daughter, 11 years later.

3. As a child I had issues with my breathing and in 1968, aged around 13, I was treated for my adenoids, and both my adenoids and tonsils were taken out. They did not cut my tonsils out correctly. I haemorrhaged and it was for this procedure that I needed a transfusion. I do not have a clear memory of this myself. I just remember being ill and in bed when all of the other children were outside playing and eating ice cream.

4. I clearly got better and it was not until 1978 that I knew I was infected HBV. I was 24 and pregnant with my only child, Melanie. I was undergoing routine blood tests at Queen Charlotte's Hospital in Hammersmith when I was pulled into a side room by a team of doctors. I was shaking because I thought there was something wrong with my baby. They were asking me questions about my lifestyle, they said "you don't look the type, but have you ever injected yourself?" I was shocked. The answers to that question and all the other questions were no, the doctors accepted this. I was then told I had HBV. Once they found out I had HBV they treated me like a private patient. I had my own room and special care. Looking back, maybe that was to contain me to prevent risk of infection to others.

5. The only blood transfusion I had before 1978, was for my tonsil and adenoid procedure. It was not until I spoke to my parents that we connected the operation with the transfusion. I have never been told that the transfusion contained contaminated blood, but there is no other way I could have contracted HBV. My brother said that I probably got it from blood imported from America that was given by prisoners.

6. After I was informed I had HBV I was tested. I was told that it was a low infection and that I was a 'carrier'. Other than that, I was given no other information. I was given a little brown card that detailed my blood type etc. I needed to carry the card around with me. I must have thrown it away by now. It is strange, you get given a brown card but no advice. My infection

has been described in numerous documents since, as chronic HBV. I just lived my life as normal as possible, but nothing was ever explained to me about what it means to be a carrier. When my daughter was born she had to be injected and vaccinated against my HBV infection. My husband at the time was also vaccinated. He died of cancer in 2010.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. The only other time I have had blood transfusions was during my cancer. I was diagnosed with Stage 11B Mesonepheric Adenorcarcinoma of the cervix, a rare form of cancer in November 2012. I was told only 30 people in the world had my particular cancer. After that in July 2017 I had something called 'Steven Johnson syndrome', it attacked my immune system. I had blisters all over my body, it went to my lips, ears and scalp. I am very lucky it did not go to my eyes. I lost a lot of weight. I was on baby food and took Aciclovir twice a day. It took 6 months to get over. I was diagnosed with 'Steven Johnson syndrome' whilst on holiday in Spain. They did not know how I contracted the syndrome, but for some reason I did not mention I had HBV. Whether my cancer or the Steven Johnson syndrome are related to the HBV, I am not sure.

Section 4. Consent

8. I had my transfusion when I was a child. My parents probably gave consent for the operation, but I know when they came to visit me that I was already having emergency surgery, so I am not aware if consent was given for the transfusion. As far as I am aware I was not tested or treated without my knowledge or consent for research purposes.

Section 5. Impact

9. I have tried not to let this impact on my life. I am a resilient person with a strong personality. The thing I think about was how I felt when I was first told I was a carrier of HBV. I was 24 and pregnant, I was devastated. It is

not something you talk openly about, only until recently have I told friends. Before it was just family and very close friends. I cannot say it has stopped us from doing anything, but maybe I am very lucky or maybe just a positive person.

10. When it comes down to medical procedures I have always been the last person to be seen, whether that was for operations or just a dental appointment. When I started my relationship with David, I had to inform him I had HBV. Going to the doctor and telling them I have HBV was difficult, David needed to be vaccinated. As far as I am aware it has not impacted on my daughters life. I try to get on with my life in a normal way. I now need to go for 6 monthly checks. I get nervous beforehand, and I am happy every time it is over.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

11. After my cancer, and when I met David, I decided to address my HBV infection. It was 2013 and 35 years after being informed I had HBV, before I received any consultation or monitoring of the infection. Before that I was offered no treatment. No one offered me any scans, tests, check – ups, nothing. I initiated everything that has been done in relation to my HBV. No one has ever helped me or guided me. Every test I have had I had to sort out myself. I visited my GP in 2013 who referred me to Dr Matthew Foxton, the hepetologist specialist at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. I am now under Dr Verma, the consultant hepatologist at the same hospital.

12. When I first went to my GP in 2013, she mentioned a treatment. I cannot remember the name, but she said it was ghastly. I had just got over cancer, I had been in bed for 4 months and I could not face the side effects. I turned the treatment down.

13. I am now periodically tested through the NHS. I go every 6 months, they weigh me, take blood to be tested and they give me the results of the

blood tests from the previous visit, which they send to me as well. I also get an ultra sound scan from a new machine. From my tests so far, they have said my liver is clear, but I have never had a biopsy.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

14. I did not know anything about the Skipton fund until Dr Foxton informed me of it. He told me it was more for those who were infected with Hepatitis C and I did not consider it. I have recently learned that there is no compensation for those who have contracted HBV. I do not understand why this is. HBV may not have impacted on my life in the same way that Hepatitis C has done on others but nevertheless, I was given something via a blood transfusion that would not have been there if the blood had been screened and it has had an impact on my life. I did not know anything about the Inquiry until I saw it on the news last year. Up until that point I did not know any financial assistance was available or that so many people had been infected.

Section 8. Other Issues

15. If the original operation had gone correctly I would not have needed a transfusion and would not have been infected with HBV. I would prefer not to have HBV. I have contacted the Inquiry because I want some recognition of the wrong that has been done, not only to me, but all the other people. I hope no one else will have to go through it.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **GRO-C**

Dated 28th March 2019.