

Witness Name: Patrick Wickham

Statement No: WITN7279001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: October 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PATRICK WICKHAM

I, Patrick Wickham, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Patrick Wickham. I was born on GRO-C 1968, and I live at GRO-C East Sussex GRO-C
2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I have mild Haemophilia A.

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5. Up until about five years ago, I was treated at the Haematology Department at Eastbourne District General Hospital (EDGH). I am now under the Canterbury Haemophilia Comprehensive Care Centre at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital in Canterbury.
6. Sometime over the Summer of 1983 when I was 14 years old, I had an accident and was treated with Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate at EDGH. I had cut my wrist and had nicked a vein. I was given the treatment to stop the bleeding. As I recall, I had only ever been treated with FVIII on one other occasion prior to that, to treat a sports injury.
7. Not long after having the FVIII treatment, I became unwell. I was out with my friends in Tonbridge High Street during the school summer holidays. I came over very hot and pasty and I was sick. Within half an hour of being sick I looked jaundiced. One of my friends said to me 'you are very yellow'. A friend's father came to pick us up and I ended up back at EDGH and they subsequently confirmed that I was indeed jaundiced. I do not remember the name of the (lady) Hepatology Consultant, but I was told that I had 'Non-A, Non-B Hepatitis'.
8. I wasn't given much information to help me understand and/or manage the infection. I didn't understand it. I was told that there was nothing they could do but that I would have to come for three monthly blood (liver function) tests. I went for three monthly liver tests for years. My parents took me at first and then I would drive myself. I don't think that my parents understood it either. They

weren't the most caring or diligent parents in the world. We had food and a roof over our heads, but they weren't overly affectionate and there were no 'I love yous'. They were old school.

9. I remember subsequently being told not to drink too much as it would put a stress on my liver and that the hepatitis could be sexually transmitted. That was all that I was told, and, in time, my blood test appointments dropped down to six monthly intervals.

10. I wasn't offered any treatment or counselling. When I reached my late twenties, I was told by the clinicians up at EDGH that there was no trace of it. They ran several tests and told me that my body had fought it and that it had gone. No explanation has been forthcoming about any of it. When I asked about it, I was dismissed. The attitude is very much 'forget it, you haven't got it anymore, it's all over and done with'.

11. GRO-C

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I do not believe that I was infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

13. I was treated and tested with very little information about it.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

14. **GRO-C** I always enjoyed playing sport. Our haemophilia is classified as being mild. We very rarely needed treatment. We enjoyed playing football and rugby and we loved motorcross cycling. We didn't let much stand in our way.
15. Being infected with HCV was embarrassing to me. I lived in a small town/village. It was common knowledge that **GRO-C** I were haemophiliacs and it became common knowledge that I had HCV. The stigma associated with being infected with HCV is very much like the stigma associated with HIV. People think that the infection has been transmitted sexually or that you are a 'dirty drug dealer'. If I started a relationship with anyone outside our community, I had to come out with 'oh, by the way' and explain myself. It was highly embarrassing (if not mortifying) for someone in their late teens to have to tell a potential partner that they are infected with HCV. My HCV was there at detectable levels when I had my oldest daughter. She knows about it but that experience is not something I have shared with my younger children.
16. Being infected with HCV was something I needed to declare as a medical condition for mortgage life insurance, loans and PPI. Our local bank, like other banks in the late 1980s/early 1990s, were open plan in design and I remember being asked to declare my medical conditions (haemophilia and then HCV) in full hearing of other customers there. To this day, people in our community remember. Whenever hepatitis is mentioned they say, 'you had that, didn't you?' It is still a source of worry for me, that no-one could explain to me what had happened, why it had gone or rule out the possibility that it might come back.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

17. I was never offered any treatment, counselling or psychological support. I was made to feel as if it was nothing.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

18. I haven't had any financial assistance from the Trusts and Funds.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

19. I do not wish to remain anonymous, and I understand that this Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

Dated.....

13/10/22