

Witness Name: THOMAS FARRELL

Statement No: WITN0087001

Exhibits: **WITN0087002 - 6**

Dated: 13th March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THOMAS FARRELL

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4th January 2019.

I, Thomas FARRELL, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Thomas Farrell. My date of birth is GRO-C 1935 and I live, with my wife, Sue, in our home in North Yorkshire. I took early retirement, having formerly worked in research in ICI in Redcar, until my health forced me to leave. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness has affected me, the treatment I have received and the impact it has had on my wife and I, and our lives together.
2. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement

3. In anticipation of my interview with the Inquiry team, I have prepared some notes with the assistance of my wife and grandson, which I exhibit as **WITN0087002**.

Section 2. How Infected

4. In 1985, GRO-C the running group I founded went to Benidorm for a race. I have always been a keen runner, and became a senior club coach, helping to train people up to Olympic standard. I wasn't participating in the race but was instead jogging behind the runners. My chest began to tighten and when I crossed the finish line, I went straight to the paramedics who had been deployed to provide first aid. I knew I was having a heart attack. I was 54 years old.
5. I was taken to a private hospital in Benidorm, and put on bed rest for three weeks. I received no other real treatment at this time.
6. The specialist, Dr Adrian Davis, at James Cook, was unable to establish why I had had a heart attack, but did say that I needed a bypass. There was such a long wait for the operation that we decided to pay £50 to go for a private consultation. Having done that, we were then advised it would be £3000 for the operation to be done the next week, which we couldn't pay. However, having seen the private consultant, I seemed to be moved up the list, and I didn't have to wait as long for the operation as initially advised.
7. I was sent to the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle for an angiogram. It showed that all four of the arteries connected to my heart were blocked, and that I needed a quadruple bypass. I was advised that after the surgery, I would be up and running again in no time. Sadly this was not to be the case.
8. While waiting for my surgery, I was prescribed aspirin to help thin my blood. On the 6th October 1989, I was told to stop taking the aspirin, as

my operation would be the following week. I was admitted into the Freeman on 9th October 1989, and had my operation on the 11th. Upon my admission, a junior doctor did a blood coagulation test, which consisted of a finger-prick test. He said my results were 50/50, but thought I "should" be alright for my operation.

9. I was not. I was operated on and closed up, but I was suffering from atrial fibrillation, so I had a second surgery, to see if there was a bleed. They considered placing me in an induced coma to see if it would stabilise, but decided against this. There is some contention about whether or not there was a bleed, as my official notes went missing. One doctor said there was no bleed in the wound, but my blood would not clot, and I required 12 units of blood to stabilise. Another doctor said there was a "slight" bleed. They so urgently needed blood that Sue recalls a heavily pregnant nurse offering to donate hers to me.
10. I remained unconscious for two days after my operation, during which time I was kept in the Intensive Care Unit. They advised Sue to stay with me, due to my condition being considered critical. The duty nurse tried to console her, and reassured her that it was only because of the aspirin that I needed the blood.
11. Sue describes this time as a "nightmare". We were not married at that time, but were living together, and she was listed as my next of kin. However, they remained reluctant to share information with her.
12. Neither my wife nor I were given any information or advice about the risks associated with blood transfusions prior to mine occurring. We did not receive any information post-operation either. The risk of contamination was never mentioned by anyone, although, during a pre-op checkup, one nurse at James Cook did shout down the corridor to me, asking if I minded being tested for AIDS, as they didn't want to contaminate the expensive equipment at the Freeman.

13. As a result of my blood transfusion, I contracted Hepatitis C. This is Stage 2, chronic hepatitis, which I think is genotype 2.
14. Immediately after my surgery, I knew there was something wrong. I felt tired all the time and was frustrated with myself for the next year. Sue described me as 'not being very nice', 'snappy' and 'not nice to live with' at that time. She said I was not the man she expected to marry, and I had a completely different personality. The doctor said that people who have open-heart surgery often have different personalities, so we attributed my change to that.
15. When we moved, I became frustrated that I couldn't help Sue decorate, as I was too fatigued, so I just had to watch her do it. I couldn't exercise and felt like I was basically a "cabbage".
16. I had no motivation to do anything, and had to accept that I could no longer run, as I was too weak. One night, in a restaurant, a man collapsed near us. As a St John's Ambulance First Aider, I immediately got down to give him CPR, but couldn't sustain it.
17. My health deteriorated after the operation and my heart permanently ached. I was never fit again or very well. I went to my GP numerous times, who said that it was due to the operation and my damaged nerves, there was always an excuse. On another occasion, I was told it was muscle strain. I didn't want to argue, but as I had done some physiotherapy as part of my coaching, I knew it wasn't muscle strain.
18. However, five or six years ago, I saw the new cardiothoracic specialist at James Cook, who did another angiogram. Only three grafts showed up on it, and he asked if I was sure that I had a quadruple bypass. I confirmed that a quadruple bypass was in my notes. He found the fourth graft after performing a 3D angiogram, which was completely blocked, and had been since the operation. He said that due to a small leak in the valve, enough blood was getting through for my heart to

keep functioning. I have never had surgery to fix this, as I couldn't withstand it.

19. I received a letter from Dr Chapman at the National Blood Service in Newcastle on 24th June 1998 (exhibited as **WITN0087003**), informing me that they had conducted a look-back exercise and discovered that the blood I had received may have been carrying Hepatitis C. I was invited to an appointment at the Blood Transfusion Unit the following week to discuss what this meant. He had already written to my GP, who confirmed there was no other way I could've contracted Hepatitis C. I produce a copy of the letter to my GP, Dr **GRO-D** sent on 9th June 1998 informing him of the look-back exercise as my exhibit **WITN0087004**.

20. After the initial blood tests we were referred to the Freeman hospital Liver section for further examination. My wife and I had to stay overnight **GRO-C** I had a liver scan and a biopsy of my liver. The nurse here was very non-committal, as if positive results were an everyday occurrence. She didn't wear gloves when she took the blood samples and emptied the used syringes down the sink. **GRO-C**
GRO-C

21. We then saw a woman called Professor M.F. Bassendine, who said quite bluntly that 'all your tests have come back and you've got hep C'. It was like she had been conditioned to telling people that they had a life-threatening illness as she had no empathy for her patients. She drew a picture of a liver and said that on a scale of one to six of damage, I was a six. She said that in four to five years I would need a transplant, if they could find one and if I was strong enough to withstand the operation. We asked why it had taken ten years to be diagnosed, she told us that the supply of blood had nothing to do with the hospital and we should take it up with the blood transfusion service.

22. We were evidently shocked but as we left she added 'By the way, you can't sue us, as there was no test for Hepatitis C before 1991'. Given that I had just been given four to five years to live, money was the last thing on my mind. The appointment lasted less than ten minutes. Because of the poor care I received, I made a formal complaint to the Freeman, the response to which is exhibited as **WITN0087005**.
23. We weren't told about the implications. An appointment was made for us to see her understudy, a doctor named **GRO-D** though I can't remember his surname. We were given no information on safeguarding and had to research this ourselves. Sue spent countless hours at the local library learning about Hepatitis C, as we had no real idea of what it was. She learned that it could be passed through blood-to-blood contact and that if I cut myself, everything had to be sterilised. We're particularly careful around our grandchildren, and Sue makes sure she's the only one who touches me if I'm bleeding. She also read that it could be passed through saliva as well.
24. Sue read that other countries had suggested using Milk Thistle and Q10, which I've now been taking for the past 30 years. Some doctors say that the liver damage will never be cured, and that no one can say you're free of Hepatitis C – you can be low, but never clear – which conflicts with other doctors who told me I was cured.
25. The day after the tests we spoke with Dr **GRO-D** he made Sue really annoyed regarding his attitude to my Infection. He implied that my infection was my own fault and we were really angry. Sue said 'he hasn't asked for this, you've given it to him! He's come to you for a life-saving operation and you've given him a death sentence'.

Section 3. Other Infections

26. I do not believe I have been infected with anything other than Hepatitis C as a result of infected blood. As far as I am aware I have never been tested for HIV.

Section 4. Consent

27. I do not believe I have ever been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent. Nor do I believe I have been tested for the purposes of research.

28. In the nine years between being infected and diagnosed I attended my GP on numerous occasions, complaining of ill health and tiredness. Not once was I asked to provide a blood test. My fatigue was always blamed on the medication I was on and the heart issues I suffered with.

Section 5. Impact

29. I lost a year of my life whilst I was on Interferon. The side effects were so horrendous after injecting myself, which had to be done three times a week. I would experience a reaction immediately after injecting, and would shiver and feel freezing cold. Sue would pack my bed with hot water bottles just before I injected to offset feeling so cold.

30. I had flu-like symptoms all the time and completely lost my appetite. Consequently, my weight dropped to six stone (my normal weight being around 10 stone). I had sickness and diarrhoea and Sue would have to take me to the bathroom, as I couldn't walk there myself. She would also have to lift me in and out of the bath and bathe me. I was effectively bedridden for a year.

31. I felt so unwell and the side effects were so severe that after three months on the treatment, it was recommended that I come off it. I refused, believing that if I stopped the treatment, I would die.
32. I am permanently fatigued because of the liver damage, requiring me to take a nap around midday for an hour. Also, I have learned since taking it, that Interferon destroys your immune system. Despite having flu jabs every year, I am always catching colds and taking antibiotics for my lungs. Even now, if I feel a slight draught, I get a cold. We have the heating on all year round to avoid this.
33. Not being active and able to lead a normal life has made me very depressed. I used to train every day and could run up to 60 miles a week. I built the running group up to over 80 members and we would run track and cross-country. This stopped after my operation and the Hepatitis C virus, albeit I didn't know it at that time.
34. I do find I am forgetful – though dementia tests have proven that I do not have it – I find that it's more like a 'brain fog' and I feel like my memory is on a slight delay. Sue frequently finishes sentences for me, and I get frustrated when I can't remember something quickly enough.
35. I also suffered from impotency for some time as a result of either the infection, or my treatment, GRO-C
GRO-C
36. Initially, after my wife made enquiries, I was told that I was too old to receive treatment for my HCV, being aged 64. It was only after contacting our MP, Dr "Mo" Mowlem, and explaining the situation to her, that we made progress. She contacted someone at the Freeman Hospital and two weeks later, we received a letter, inviting me to the Freeman to begin a one-year course of Interferon.

37. I was unable to take Ribavirin with Interferon, due to my heart problems. Luckily, the Interferon was enough to contain the Hepatitis C, and at the end of my treatment, I was told I had been cured.
38. I still see a liver specialist, Dr Monier, every six months. At my most recent appointment in December 2018, Hepatitis C antibodies were detected; fortunately there is no sign of cancer in my liver. Exhibit **WITN0087006 refs.**
39. We have never spoken to anyone about what happened to me, and as such have never had any real backlash. When I was on Interferon, we wouldn't have people over, so no one saw how bad the side effects were. Our social life was practically non-existent. If we did visit friends, we had to be home early because of my fatigue. Our family knows, but have never treated us any differently.
40. I had tried to go back to work after the operation, but was unable to conduct my work and as such was given ill health retirement after only six months being back. I retired with a full pension because it was due to my ill health. However, this was ten years earlier than anticipated and we have been unable to earn any income for the past 30 years.
41. We struggled for a long time to make ends meet, we had a mortgage and bills to pay, and I also had to pay for my prescriptions. Without my pension, we could have become homeless.
42. I am only able to get travel insurance through SAGA, which is £360 a week because of my illnesses.
43. As well as my wife, Sue has been my carer for the past 30 years, a role she did not expect to have to perform so soon after we were married. [REDACTED] GRO-C
- [REDACTED] GRO-C We had only been together for four years when I had my heart attack and operation

and without her, I wouldn't be alive today. We were lucky to have some close friends who helped her with heavy housework and gardening.

GRO-C

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

44. I always tell medical professionals about my infection. Around 15 years ago, my dentist couldn't remove my teeth when I needed them taking out, because of my Hepatitis. I had to go to James Cook to have them removed instead. I also had my gall bladder removed on a separate occasion. Both times, I recall being treated as normal.

45. Neither my wife nor I have ever been offered counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with Hepatitis C. We have always relied on each other. Sue felt like she couldn't always show me how she was feeling

GRO-C

GRO-C

46. GRO-C

Section 7. Financial Assistance

47. I found out about the Skipton Fund by accident in 2004. I picked up a leaflet on Hepatitis C from somewhere, though I don't recall where. There was a small paragraph about the Skipton Fund in it. I called them and received the response, 'Oh, Mr Farrell, you're on our list'. No one had ever contacted me and I can only assume my information was shared with them by my GP.

48. GRO-B

GRO-B

49. The GRO-B process was easy. I wrote to Professor Bassendine as it required confirmation from a doctor. Although she took a month to reply, I received GRO-B swiftly afterwards.

50. GRO-B I worry that when I die, GRO-B Sue will suffer as a result. We're still paying the mortgage on our house, which she will have to sell. Half of my private pension from ICI transfers to her, but we can't do that GRO-B GRO-B which seems like an additional effort at an already difficult time.

51. GRO-B

52. GRO-B GRO-B

Section 8. Other Issues

53. When I was first infected, there was a solicitor's firm in Newcastle looking for people who had received contaminated blood. However, they required that I take out an insurance policy so that if they lost, their fees would still be paid. However, if they won, I would have to pay them fees, plus half of any compensation I received.

54. Contaminated blood has been mentioned numerous times in Parliament. Each time it was due to be discussed, I would write to my MP and ask them to raise my case. However, I would be given the same reply of 'we hope to arrange an Inquiry soon'.

55. We have raised this issue with four of our MPs. Marjorie Mowlem was great, and was the reason I received Interferon however, since then, each MP has been bad.
56. Vera Baird said, 'what are you complaining for? You're still alive', when I raised the issue with her.
57. Ian Swales refused to discuss the issue with me on one occasion, as it was his wife's birthday.
58. Anna Turley has lost our files on multiple occasions. We have given her office lever arch files of material but when the Inquiry was announced, we asked for them back, as we didn't have copies of everything in there. We were told that the file had gone missing.
59. On another occasion, we asked Anna to raise our case as she was heading to Parliament, and contaminated blood was due to be discussed. Her office apologised and said she was running late and would not be able to raise my issues in the Commons. When we went for the file three weeks later, we were told a junior clerk in the House of Commons had accidentally shredded it. We find this hard to believe, as people don't tend to shred files without instruction.
60. We want answers. Why did this happen and why has it been covered up? We want someone to be held accountable for the hardships we have suffered as a result of my infection.
61. As I have explained to the investigators, I am 14 years older than my wife, I understand that I may not be around when the Inquiry reports, I don't need to see the end of this Inquiry, however I do need to make sure I get justice for my wife, so she does not have to suffer when I die. Sue is not in the best of health and I worry about her.

62. I have collected many newspaper cuttings over the years and have sent many of these to the Inquiry since it was announced.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated 13th March 2019