

Witness Name: Fraser Bissett  
Statement No.: WITN002090  
Exhibits:  
Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FRASER BISSETT

---

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018. I adopt the paragraph number in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Mr Fraser Bissett will say as follows: -

#### Section 1. Introduction

My name is Fraser Bissett. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1983. My address is known to the Inquiry. I live with my girlfriend, Amy Andrews. I work with a large utilities company working with gas and electricity. I do not wish to name them at this time. I intend to speak about my father, Alexander Bissett's illness of Hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.

#### Section 2. How Affected

2. a. My father was a diagnosed Haemophiliac. I don't know what type of Haemophilia he had but I believe it was severe Haemophilia.
  
- b. I know that my father received blood products. I do not know the name of the blood products that he received. He had to receive various products throughout the years and anytime he had an injury. I don't think the doctors from Ninewells Hospital and Kings Cross Hospital Dundee pinpointed when it was that he received the infected product. He received the products numerous times over the years. I believe it was somewhere in the 1980s when my father was infected with Hepatitis C due to his sudden health decline during that period. My mother and I have spoken about this. I was born in 1983 so I do not have first-hand memories of this and my mum has given me a lot of the information from the early stages. I believe one of the drugs he received was one of the Factor drugs. My mother and I spoke about this and she told me he was receiving this for his haemophilia, one of the gene products.

c. My father was under the care of Ninewells Hospital, Dundee and Kings Cross Hospital, Dundee for all medical matters relating to his health and blood.

d. I do not know at what point my father was infected. He was tested at Kings Cross Hospital, Dundee in 1995. From my notes that I have taken down from his medical records, I can see he was admitted to hospital in April 1995 for investigations, he had some tests done in October 1995 and he was informed in January 1996 that he had Hepatitis C. I don't know any names of the doctors involved with the care of my father or of the doctors prescribing the infected products. From my knowledge, if my father got a cut then he was given a product to clot his blood, no matter how big or small. My parents didn't discuss matters like this at in front of me as a child or in front of my siblings. I would have been about 12 years old in 1995, when the investigations were carried out on my father at Kings Cross Hospital, Dundee. I believe he was told at the time they advised him of diagnosis that Hepatitis C and told him it was nothing to worry about.

### Further Information

a. I do not know what information was given to my father before he would receive a blood product about the risk of infection. I would do not know if there was a conversation around risks that I am aware of but I would like to know why this had not taken place if it should have. I believe my father was told not to worry after diagnosis but I do not know much more. I don't know who ultimately told my father about his diagnosis. I was a young teenager at the time and my family didn't discuss matters like this with me.

b. My mum, Moira Ramsey Bissett tells me that no one provided her or my dad with information about the infection. Through conversations with my dad, I know the information was not available at the time. Father said to me that he was never told about the products he received. He was just presented with the product by the doctors and told that it would help him at the time. I believe the doctors didn't really know what they were dealing with given how little they would speak about it in 1995 and 1996 and how quiet they were to my father about how he came to be infected.

c. I consider that my father should have been provided with more information earlier. If he had been told what was wrong with him, he could have had the opportunity to make lifestyle choices, to be healthier. He could have prolonged his life rather than be told "not to worry" which is what he was told. Being told this meant he didn't hold in high regards how vulnerable his health was. He didn't realise the effects the illness was having on his body. In modern science there are special diets for everything including special diets of people with damaged livers. None of this was made available to him. I don't believe that adequate information was provided at the time when he was told he was infected. I think my dad led a healthy life. He did the best he could and it was a shock. I don't know when people found out people were infected. There were delays with my father's diagnosis. He may have been infected in the 1970's or 1980's when he was receiving the Factor products. They said nothing to him until 1996, he should have been told straight away. He should not have had to wait until his life started to deteriorate in 1995.

d. I was told the risk of spreading the infection would be minimal. It would be blood to blood contact so nothing to worry about from our point of view.

### Section 3. Other Infections

3. I am unaware of my father contracting any other infection other than the Hepatitis C from receiving the infected blood products.

#### Section 4. Consent

4. a. I believe my father was treated or tested without his knowledge. My father was called back numerous times to the hospital for tests but I don't think he was ever told why he needed to go back so many times. The doctors at Kings Cross Hospital, Dundee, were taking a lot of blood then. That was in October 1995 and also in January 1996. They didn't know what was wrong with him so in April 1995 they did a lot of tests. [GRO-B] was diagnosed first around this time I am unsure on the dates. He was also a haemophiliac and was diagnosed with hepatitis C. The hospital wanted my father to go back to the hospital numerous times to be tested when this came to light.
- b. I believe my father was treated or tested without his consent. The doctors at Kings Cross Hospital knew about his infection in the autumn of 1995 and they didn't tell him. The doctors at the hospital didn't even tell him they were testing for hepatitis, definitely no consent.
- c. I believe my father was treated or tested without being given adequate or full information. It think this as the hospital didn't know the scale of the infection. I think that they ultimately needed to gain an understanding as to how far this infection had gone as well as know how badly the population would be affected. The way my dad described this was that the doctors would just keep their mouths shut at his appointments. He told me he felt that all of the information was closed to him over the years.
- d. [GRO-B] [GRO-B] were infected with Hepatitis C as well. I do believe it is perfectly plausible that my father was used for the purposes of research. I would like to know if this did happen and how far it went with patients like my dad.

#### Section 5. Impact

5. a. physically my father had a really hard time. He was tired all the time. He had physical joint pains and long periods in bed. He was always sore and always had headaches. He took a lot of pain medication and I think this must have masked some of his pain. He had a lot of problems with his joints as well. I find it hard to say what the impact was mentally for my father. He has a strong will and he continued to run his own business for a period of time after he was diagnosed. My mum tells me that he continued to work right up until the point where he was told to stop working by the doctors in the Haematology department at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, in July 2001, or he would die basically. He was a self-employed businessman at this point running a whole sales confectionary business. I would imagine that for a man like my father who had run his own business for 20-30 years it must have been incredibly emotionally draining being ill like he was but he fought on for as long as he could. It was incredibly hard watching my dad's troubles for all the years. He then got to a point where the doctors at Ninewells Hospital, thought they finally had a treatment for the Hepatitis C that made the virus undetectable. He underwent this and he was declared clear of the virus with the new drugs, only to die 6 months later. It was a pretty awful period. We spent decades fighting a virus and he just kept going. The Interferon treatment had failed and it had reached a point his liver was on total shut down. He had the liver transplant in 2007 which was a great success but then he developed lymphoma in 2013 and leukaemia in 2015.
- b. In 2007 he was assessed at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and he was told he needed a transplant to go on living. He had the transplant in 2007 and his health became reasonable for about 5 years. Then after this period he developed a lymphoma in his neck where the tubes had been in him previously. It has since been agreed by the main doctor in the Cancer Unit at Ninewells Hospital, since my father passed away, that this was what caused the deterioration in my father's health. He was put on a drug which was a form of gene therapy called R-CHOP. He was on this drug for too long. The drug R-

CHOP reduced his immune system it caused the leukaemia to develop and then ultimately this killed him.

c. His first Interferon treatment for hepatitis C failed. His body rejected the treatment the first time in the 1990's. He ultimately needed a transplant by 2007 or he would have died. He had the transplant in 2007 and he had more treatment for the hepatitis C, then he was diagnosed with lymphoma. Then a new Interferon treatment was developed that inserted a gene therapy that stopped my father's body from rejecting the treatment. Therefore, he had more treatment in 2014 and was then diagnosed with leukaemia. He passed away April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016.

d. My father had Interferon back in October 1998. From memory I think he had further drugs as well. He was then in bed for 3 months. He couldn't move as he was in so much pain. I had to check on him every day. I kept thinking he was dead. He self-injected several times a week. It wasn't making a difference to him after 3 months. The injection seemed to be lowering his immune system so he came off it. He became seriously unwell. Back in October 1999, the doctors were pumping a drug into his stomach. This almost killed him. The drug he had to take was a jet black colour. That was the inside of her stomach looked like. It was not nice. His neck would swell up to a point he could not breathe.

e. I think the treatment with the technology at the time was all the hospital and doctors had to give my father. I would like to know if there was more they could have done but I do not think that they could have. I do not think there were any obstacles to treatment that I know about. The new Interferon treatment that did cure the Hepatitis C I know my father was one of the first people to get that drug.

f. I believe my father received the treatment that was available as and when it was available.

g. My father couldn't get out of his bed. He was exhausted. He was always sleeping. He and I never discussed the mental aspect of the treatment.

h. My dad had haemophilia. When he was going to the dentist it was always a big deal. I think a lot of dentists were reluctant to see him because of the infected blood. In the end he went to see a friend who was a dentist because no one else would see him.

a. My father never had a private or social life when he was infected. He was never well enough. He was constantly in bed, never awake, very quiet and sleeping. Anytime he was better he would be doing what work he could do to bring in money into the home. It was a huge drain on our family. I had to work 3 jobs from the age of 12 or 13 so we could earn money and not drain him and my mum. My father had to sell his business in 2002 and he had to give up work. He was advised to stop working. He was showing face at the business but physically he couldn't do the job anymore. He actually went back to work in 2008 for Tesco. He was doing shelf stacking duties and did this for 6 months but then stopped working due to his ongoing health issues.

b. I had to work more at a younger age due to my father being infected. I was always worrying about looking after him. I didn't focus at school as much as I should have been able. It probably did have an effect on my education as I couldn't concentrate. I probably didn't pursue the career I would have done because I was busy trying to help out financially with work. I am not clear on what I would have done, but I would have likely have gotten a trade and become a plumber or a joiner. My mum, Moira Ramsay Bissett stopped work in 2005 to care for my dad. She had been a full time primary school assistant.

## Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

6. My father received the practical support for the illness from my mum Moira Ramsay Bissett. She would help him with all the day to day things, like cleaning, washing, shopping and things. No one ever came round to help otherwise. No nurse visited us, we only ever had a Marie Curie nurse come over when my father was on his deathbed. He never was offered any psychological support. No one in our family was offered psychological help. I think the government, should be open about what they have done by allowing people to become infected. The blood products were imported here, the Government should be saying *"We mucked up and we should do whatever you need so you never need anything again"*. I would include psychological support in that category and it should have been offered. I would like to know why it was not offered.

## Section 7. Financial Assistance

7. a. I am unclear when and how my father found out about the financial assistance that was available.
- b. My father was given two payments of approximately £25,000 each. I am unsure on the exact amounts but I know he received two payments. I am not sure where from.
- c. I do not know how my father applied for assistance in order to receive the money that he did receive.
- e. I am not aware of any obstacles to receiving financial assistance but I could not be sure. I believe the amount of money received came down to how ill a person was at the time of the application. I think that is a disgrace. [GRO-B] were all infected with hepatitis C with different stages of the illness. [GRO-B] he did not need a liver transplant because the 1<sup>st</sup> Interferon treatment was successful for him. He was cured earlier on than my dad [GRO-B]. This meant that [GRO-B] was not eligible for the 2<sup>nd</sup> payment from the Skipton Fund because he had not required a liver transplant.
- f. I do not have any particularly observations about the financial assistance. I think the amounts and if you were eligible, came down to what treatment you were on and if it had worked. I don't think it should be like that and if you were infected you should have been financially helped regardless. The amount of money that the government put into the Penrose Inquiry was disgraceful. The Government should have put their hands up and should have compensated the infected so they didn't have to worry about the financial matters ever again. No amount of money will bring my father back now but it would have made him more comfortable and worry less about surviving.
- a. I have not personally applied for any financial assistance from any of trusts or funds arising from my father being infected.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

8. I do not have any further documents to provide. I do believe that my mother will have information which she would want to provide.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

17/12/18