

Witness Name: Angela Wilhelmina Adriana Van Hulten

Statement No:WITN2571001

Dated:17th April 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

**FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANGELA WILHELMINA ADRIANA VAN
HULTEN**

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Angela Wilhelmina Adriana Van Hulten, will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Angela Wilhelmina Adriana Van Hulten. My date of birth is GRO-C 1977 and my address is GRO-C Amsterdam. I have three children, all of whom are now adults. I presently live alone with two of my children. I am currently unemployed and spend most of my time caring for my 5 year old grandson.

2. I intend to speak my about my step father John David Hill's diagnosis and how he was infected with hepatitis C, which he contracted from a blood transfusion in 1980. In particular, the impact this has had on me as his step daughter.
3. My mother separated from my biological father when I was around 8 or 9 years old. We moved to Amsterdam when I was coming up to 10 years old and that is when I met John. My mother was already in a relationship with him at that point and the three of us moved in together. I did not really have a relationship with my biological father after we moved to Amsterdam and so John became the only real father figure in my life from that point onwards.
4. I was 16 to 17 years old when my mother gave birth to my half sister, Julia Hill. John also had a daughter from a previous relationship, Lotte, and while she is not biologically related to me, she came in to my life as a baby and I consider her to be my sister. We were very close as siblings growing up.
5. I would describe John as a very intelligent and sweet but direct man. I was very close to him and he gave me away at my wedding.

2. How Infected

1. I know that John came to be infected with hepatitis C as a result of a blood transfusion in a hospital in the UK. I recall him telling me a story about his car accident as a child but this was before we knew that this story would turn out to be so significant. I understand that the car accident was in 1980 and my knowledge of what happened at that time is therefore limited.
2. When John was diagnosed with hepatitis C, I was living in Barcelona with my ex husband as he played football for Barcelona FC. I cannot

remember exactly when he was diagnosed as it all seems a bit of a blur. When I first found out, I was very optimistic about it and did not realise, or chose to accept, the severity of it. I just thought it was something we could cure and get through it. My head did not really want to accept what was happening to him and that is why my memory is a bit blurry to start with.

3. I had my three sons at the time that John was diagnosed and whilst I was living in Barcelona, I would visit home regularly and they would also quite often come to visit us as well. I know that he had to have blood testing in hospital and that was when he found out. I am told that this was around 2003. I was not living in Amsterdam at the time and so I do not really have any specific details about this.
4. I remember my mother being very worried about us all possibly being infected. I was told that it was less of a risk for me because I am not blood related to John. I had a normal routine check with my Doctor in Holland and was tested for hepatitis C as part of that. The results were clear. I guess I did not really worry at the time about the possibility of being infected because I was trying to bury my head in the sand. I think it was a coping mechanism to turn a blind eye to what was really happening.
5. I am unable to comment on what information was provided to John at the time or whether he should have been provided with any information sooner. I also do not know how the results of any tests or information about the infection was communicated to him.

3. Other Infections

1. As far as I am aware, John only became infected with hepatitis C as a result of being given contaminated blood products.

4. Consent

1. I am unable to comment on whether John was treated or tested without his knowledge, consent, being given full information or for the purposes of research.

5. Impact

1. When John was initially diagnosed with hepatitis C, I was living in Barcelona. I moved back to Holland around a year before he passed away. I noticed that he got more tired and withdrawn as time went on. He would have good days and bad days but in the later stages, it was mostly bad days. He was very poorly and he was in a lot of pain. If he contracted an illness such as the flu, then it would be ten times worse for him. I know that he suffered with pain in his leg and his back and some days, his whole body would just ache. I also recall that he sometimes looked a bit yellow.
2. I could notice him getting weaker as time went on. It happened very slowly, but it was happening. He could walk when it was a good day but when it was a bad day he would just have to stay in bed, or only move around a little bit during the day.
3. I know that my step father was very scared about what was happening to him. He presented as very sad and depressed. I know that he was afraid to look into the future as he did not know how long he would be around. He still tried to make the best of it and he tried to be strong for me, my sisters and also for his grandchildren.
4. When I moved back to Holland we would see each other at least three times a week. He really wanted to do a lot with his grandchildren who he loved very deeply but he couldn't because he was so tired. He missed out on a lot because of that. My children were 5, 7 and 9

years of age at the time and so they were very active and he was unable to keep up with them.

5. For me, it was like I lost my father and grandfather to my children all at the same time. It was very difficult to come to terms with it at the start and I didn't believe that it was happening. It was not until 2006/2007 when it became real to me. This was during a moment whilst John and I were sitting together that he looked at me and said "I am so scared" and he got very upset. He had come to visit us in Barcelona because it was around his birthday time. I will never ever forget that moment and that is when it hit home for me that we were all going to lose him. He straight up asked me to take care of my sisters and that is when I realised that it was really happening and I could not hide from it any more.
6. The moment I acknowledged the disease I got very scared. I was still trying to keep hope that it would get better but I knew deep down that it was only getting worse. I was scared to lose my father and I was devastated for my children. It was very hard dealing with the uncertainty and not knowing how and what was going to happen to him.
7. Whilst I was hurting, I had to put on a brave face and be strong for my sons. I was also going through a divorce at the same time that this was happening and this made it even harder for me. My step father was always my guide in life about what to do and how to cope with things and I was not able to speak with him as I always had done. It was very hard to discuss the future with him as I was worried about how this would affect him, knowing that he would not be around for it. I know that he was very much worried about leaving us all and I would always reassure him that we would be fine and we would find a way to make things work when he leaves us. He didn't want to die but he knew that it was inevitable. He tried not to let it show but we knew

how he was feeling. There were times when his emotions would get the better of him and he would not be able to hide it.

8. I tried not to tell my sons much about what their grandfather was going through and I would try not to let them see him when he was having a bad day. If he was having a bad day, then he would just sit and play games with them which didn't involve much movement so that they did not notice anything was wrong with him.
9. My half sister, Julia, was also very young at the time and so I am not sure how much she understood. We all tried to shelter her from what was happening as much as we could. It also had a big impact on my mother and I could see that she was in an awful lot of emotional pain. As I was the oldest of the siblings, my mother would speak to me about things more openly and it was awful for me to see her going through what was happening to her husband.
10. When my step father sadly passed away, it was a big shock to us all, especially my sons. They were so devastated and so sad and could not believe that he was no longer around. It was a big shock because we were not expecting it to happen when it did.
11. My step father was on a trip in Tangier with a close friend of his in March 2009 when he started to feel poorly. I believe that he started vomiting blood and he was taken to hospital. I am told that he slipped into a coma and passed away very quickly. I was with my uncle and my mother at my grandmother's home as we were spending the night there when my mother received a call from my step father's friend saying that my step father was poorly and he would keep us updated. I recall that we were all sitting at the table and were looking to see if we could book tickets for my mother to go out and see him the next day. I again was in denial and I was telling my mother that it was not necessary and it was going to be fine but deep down inside I had a gut feeling that this was bad.

12. My mother received another call later on and I recall hearing her shouting. The sound that she made I have never heard her make since and I can only describe it as pure devastation. We were very lucky that we were all together that night when we found out. I helped my mother to sort out everything from that moment on in terms of getting my step father's body home. It was a very difficult time for us all.
13. I know that my step father was going to hospital regularly in the United Kingdom and I think that it was Plymouth hospital that he was attending. I told my mother before he passed away that the next time he went I would go with him and stay with him, but sadly I never got the chance. I do not know any specifics about the treatment that he received but I think that there were things he was told he could try but would not cure the hepatitis C. I recall seeing a sign a number of years ago saying that there was a cure for hepatitis C and I just cried and cried. I so wish that things could have been different for my step father.
14. There was a stigma in Holland at the time that only drug addicts had hepatitis C. People always assumed that you contracted the disease because of something bad that you did, and not something that was given to you through no fault of your own. If I was to have a conversation about my step father, then straight away I would always make it clear that it was through a blood transfusion so people would not think negatively about him.
15. I know that my father had to eventually give up work as a result of his illness. I am sure that this would have had a financial impact on my parents but they didn't really speak to me about it. If my parents were ever struggling, because I was financially independent at the time I would always jump in to help them.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

1. I know that my step father wanted to have treatment for his hepatitis C but it was very difficult for him to get as he was told that it could not be cured.
2. I do not know whether any counselling or psychological support was ever made available to my step father but I know that there was never any offered to me as his step daughter. I just had to get on with things and deal with it in my way.

7. Financial Assistance

1. I do not know whether my step father received any money from any of the trusts or funds set up to distribute payments whilst he was alive. However, I was recently given around €4,000 by my siblings and I was told that this was from the Skipton Fund. I did not deal with any applications as I was not blood related to my step father and so Julia and Lotte have dealt with this side of things. They kindly shared the money that they received with me as we all consider each other to be full sisters and John to be my father.

8. Other Issues

1. I do not have any documentation about my step father's illness, but I know that my mother kept everything.
2. I would like to put a few questions to the Inquiry. I want to know how this could have happened to my step father and how he came to be given contaminated blood products at a hospital where he should be considered safe. I want to know whose fault it is that this blood was given to patients at the time. I also want to know why my step father

was not contacted straight away when it was known that there was a possibility that he could have been infected.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true to the best of my information, knowledge and belief. .

GRO-C

Signed ...awa van hulten.....

Dated17-04-2019.....