

Witness Name: William Wright

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INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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Introduction by Bill Wright chair, Haemophilia Scotland

It's my privilege to welcome you all here today from all over Scotland and even as far afield as Nice in France and thank you for joining us in this commemoration of those, whom we have lost to the infected blood disaster that has ended, so tragically, so many lives.

Can I welcome those of you from other like-minded charities in not only Scotland but England, Ireland and Wales? Your being here reminds us that the sorrow and loss from this disaster stretches way beyond Scotland's borders.

While for me, it is also clearly a particular privilege to welcome our First Minister & Health Minister, who are about join us, I am sure however they will agree that the biggest privilege is today to be with those who have actually lived through the loss of loved ones – whether following infection from blood transfusion or blood product and whether from HIV or hepatitis C.

As someone who themselves was among those infected, the resilience of those left behind are an inspiration to me and many others, responding with quiet dignity and distinction, to the in-dignities you have had to face. It has been an honour in recent months, often a disturbing one, to have revealed to me many precious details of how families have been blighted in so many different ways due to treatments they expected to help rather than hinder, cure rather than kill.

In some cases, it was not only one family member who was infected. While every story is different the common themes are of illness, loss, pain, sorrow and grief but also of resilience and plain family love.

In my eyes the bereaved in this story are what is the true meaning of nobility. Ordinary folk from many walks of life drawing on deep reserves of the human spirit to respond to the darkest of times beyond your control or the control of those whom we've lost.

So for these moments this morning and this gathering we look not to anger, not to protest, not to uncertainty, not to differences, not to hard hearts or not to inflaming any sense of injustice. But instead we are here to share in our sense of loss and recognise that the pain and scars that remain are shared by many, -----for many, but----- also to look forward.

We hope that you will all stay on, after the more formal part of this morning, to talk and hear about ideas for a more permanent physical memorial to those whom we've lost. A look forward beyond the immediate pain and grief that takes such time to dispel.

Many of the memories are unavoidable. Having to care for ill and dying husbands, wives, partners, fathers, mothers, and in some cases sons, or daughters, and those profound last days and hours before their passing.

We encourage you however, particularly if you have never met anyone beyond your own family who has lived through this loss, to please come forward over lunch and say hello, so that we can introduce you to other like-minded partners and family members who have experienced such catastrophic impacts on your lives. Please take the opportunity to speak to our guests from government as well about how you have felt about your loss.

Clearly all scars will never be healed, but some may find that by also exchanging memories we are less alone.

This has been a very long and dark tunnel. Our wish is to help shine some light at its end by honouring lost loved ones through what we do next.

Thank you.