

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PATRICIA ANN CROWE

I, Patricia Ann Crowe, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Patricia Ann Crowe, of [GRO-C] Cumbria [GRO-C] DOB and my date of birth is [GRO-C] 1968. I live with my husband, Stephen, of 30 years, and we have three sons [GRO-C] I had to give up my job to be a full time foster carer for my grandson who is aged 2.
2. **This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's full medical records.**

Section 2. How Affected

3. My father, David Joseph Gill, was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII. He passed away on 6.12.1998.
4. He had severe Haemophilia A with a clotting factor of less than 1%. He received Factor VIII at The Newcastle Haemophilia Centre and The Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, between 1976 up to his death in 1998. **Exhibit WITN1176002** is an extract from The National Haemophilia Database confirming this. I am unsure as to the exact date of his infections. His consultants were Peter Hamilton and Peter Jones.

5. My father was provided with absolutely no information pertaining to the risks of receiving Factor VIII. In fact, he was advised that it was a "*miracle product*" which would change his life. This was true; but not in the way in which the consultants envisaged.
6. My father accidentally discovered that he had HIV when he applied for a letter so that he could take his Haemophilia treatment and associated paraphernalia out of the country. He duly received the letter for the purposes of Customs and Excise and it was stamped with a warning stating "*This person is infected with HIV*". This was utterly soul destroying for my father and mother; the news was exacerbated by the way in which it was delivered. I am utterly disgusted by the way in which this information was imparted to my father.
7. No-one sat my father down to explain the realities of his HIV infection to him. He received no information about how to manage this virus or about the risks of transmitting the same to others.
8. The only reason that my mother was not infected with either HIV or Hepatitis C was because she had had a full hysterectomy in the late 1970's. I do believe that my mother was extremely lucky; had it not been for her hysterectomy I have no doubt that she would have been infected.
9. No-one ever told my father that he had been infected with Hepatitis C.

Section 3. Other Infections.

10. **Exhibit WITN1176002** confirms that my father was put at risk of vCJD but was not informed of this.

Section 4. Consent.

11. My father was tested for HIV and Hepatitis C without his knowledge and therefore, impliedly, without his consent.
12. **Exhibit WITN1176002** confirms that my father was the subject of Dr Craske's research work. My father had no knowledge of this and was therefore unable to consent to this.

Section 5. Impact

13. The mental effects of the infections on my father were that he suffered serious depression. He was a private person and he did keep things from us, but I wholly believe that his intentions were to shield his family from any possible stigma. My father did not even confide in anyone except my mother; he did not even tell his own mother.
14. My father suffered many physical effects as a result of his infections, including a brain infection, bronchial pneumonia, sepsis, a knee infection, a chest infection and shingles.
15. My father received combination therapy for his HIV. I was aware that some patients were given a placebo. I believe that my father received the "*real treatment*". He was so poorly whilst undergoing this treatment and became intolerant to a number of foods.
16. My father also suffered from severe pain in his joints which necessitated the use of a walking stick. As his infections took over, his entire mobility was compromised and he became wheelchair bound. My parents had to move into a bungalow to ensure that my father had some sort of quality of life.
17. The most terrifying illness which my father suffered from was Fournier Gangrene, which occurred in or around June 1998. He was hospitalised and the treatment for this was severe; my father underwent a lengthy operation to remove his entire scrotum. During the removal process his scrotum was left exposed without any covering of skin to allow the infection to heal. He had to be anaesthetised on a daily basis so that his dressing could be changed. My father had to have a new scrotum made from both skin and fat which was taken from his inner thighs.
18. During his last operation, to cover his testicles with skin grafts, the surgeon had to remove a testicle as there was still a patch of infection that had not responded to the antibiotics.
19. My father was finally discharged from hospital but only for a short time. My husband and I took my father out for an ice cream one day and I recall that his speech was slurred and he was dragging his legs. We took him back to the hospital and he was diagnosed with lesions on the brain and from this point on he was wheelchair bound.
20. My father just wanted to enjoy himself at this stage because he knew that this period was the beginning of the end.

21. On 4.12.1998 my father developed a chest infection and sepsis. He was rushed to intensive care on 5.12.1998. This was such a terrible time as I had to urgently telephone Peter Hamilton to ask him how much Factor VIII my father needed in order to put him on the ventilator. He told me that he thought my father was already unconscious and when he realised that this was not the case he provided me with the information I needed. I was so upset as it was my father's biggest fear to die fighting for his breath and I was urgently trying to administer the Factor VIII whilst my father was struggling to breathe. This was the last memory I have of my father and the last thing he said to me was "*get it in me*". I am saddened by this and angry that the consultants were not able to administer the Factor VIII and instead left a distressed daughter to deal with this.
22. The doctors tried to do everything they could but were unable to save my father who died, fighting for his breath, at 2.30pm on 6.12.1998. I am so angry about what the NHS and the Government did to him.
23. In terms of financial effects; my father retired aged 50 due to his ill health and my mother took a redundancy package to care for my father on a full time basis. Finances were tight but we managed.
24. The impact upon my mother has been everlasting. She is still single following my father's death over 20 years ago. She had been with my father since the age of 15 and she was aged 51 when he died. My mother has never recovered from this tragedy that took her soulmate from her far too early.
25. My mother went into a state of extreme hyperactivity following my father's passing. She rushed everything and my father was cremated on the Wednesday following his death on the Sunday. My father did not have an autopsy and I thought that this would be the case. I also recall the undertakers telephoning to advise that they could not shave, or properly prepare, him due to his HIV status.
26. I had an exam the day after my father's funeral as I was studying for the Higher National Diploma in Business Studies. My sister, Jenny lost her best friend when my father passed away. I had to stay strong at the time of my father's death and hold everything together. I felt like I had to support my mother and Jenny and, in hindsight, I never really got to properly grieve for the loss of my father.

27. Before I got married, I remember attending hospital appointments with my father to keep him company. As my father became increasingly weaker I was able to step in and drive him to appointments. It was difficult seeing very poorly men and boys in the hospital and I was fully aware that they were dying. On each subsequent visit there would be fewer and fewer as death had come calling for them. It was a frightening and horrifying sight and these memories will stay with me forever.
28. The only person I confided in about my fathers' HIV was my husband, who was extremely supportive from the moment I told him which was in or around 1987/1988. He has been my rock and I have not confided in anyone else. My husband comforted me when I was worried that my father would not live long enough to walk me down the aisle and he said *"Well, we will just have to get married sooner, won't we"*. The wedding was brought forward and my dear father walked me down the aisle.
29. I suffer with bouts of anxiety and depression and have been on anti-depressants since my father's passing. I have had some time off work but I have always managed to hold a job down.
30. I have lost the one person who I would have turned to for help and advice in connection with my GRO-C I am so proud of my father as he just got on with life despite the terrible cards he was dealt. He never really complained and I miss this remarkable man every day.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

31. As far as I am aware my father was not offered any counselling or psychiatric support despite the fact that he was a very depressed man, having been infected with both HIV and Hepatitis C.
32. My mother, sister or I were never offered any counselling or psychiatric support.
33. I did attend a number of mother and daughter's weekends away at The Haemophilia Centre in Newcastle but I found these progressively more and more upsetting because each time we went the number of mothers and daughters had dwindled because so many of the men were dying and at an alarming rate.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. I am aware that my father received the Stage 1 payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund. However, I do not know what other financial support he received.

35. I applied for the Stage 2 payment of £50,000 from the Skipton Fund, on behalf of my father, and I found out about this payment via the Tainted Blood Support Group.

36. I found the process of applying extremely complicated and lengthy and if it had been left to my parents I am fairly confident that they would have been put off by the number of hoops and the length of time that the process took.

37. I know that my mother received some financial support but I am unaware as to the amounts.

Section 8. Other Issues

38. I am a member of Factor 8, the Fatherless Generation and Tainted Blood support groups.

Conclusion

39. I want to know the truth and whether the NHS was fully aware of what it was doing to my father.

40. I would like my mother to be compensated and to be able to live the rest of her life as comfortably as possible.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

41. I do not wish apply for anonymity and I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-C

Dated.

28 January 2019