

Witness Name: Anna Clare Stanger

Statement No: WITN1540001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: JULY 2020

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

---

### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANNA CLARE STANGER**

---

I, Anna Clare Stanger will say as follows:-

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Anna Clare Stanger and I was born on the GRO-C 1969.  
My current address is GRO-C Bournemouth, GRO-C  
I am a company director and I also teach.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late father, John Alan Douglas Ritchie.  
He was born on the GRO-C 1938 and passed away aged 54 on the  
GRO-C 1993. My father was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C (Hep  
C) (previously known as Non A, Non B Hepatitis) as a result of receiving  
contaminated blood products.
3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access  
to my late father's full medical records.**

#### **Section 2. How infected**

4. My father suffered from severe Haemophilia A. (I believe that) His FVIII level  
was lower than 1%. I am not sure when he was diagnosed but I would

assume it was at a young age. I am aware he suffered from bleeds as child and I believe my father had a sibling who died as a child as a result of Haemophilia. I am a symptomatic carrier of the Haemophilia gene.

5. I don't really know much about the blood products that my father received. I know that when Factor VIII (FVIII) treatment became available he (would have been) was treated with it. Prior to being treated with FVIII I imagine he was treated with whole blood and plasma.
6. I believe I was around 8 years old when my father first started using FVIII treatment so I believe it would have been in the mid to late 1970s. Soon after he was treating himself at home. I took very little notice of what my father was being treated with when I was a child; to me life at home was normal. I do recall that my father had little bottles of freeze dried Factor VIII and I would help him prepare the product so that he could administer it.
7. To the best of my knowledge, I believe that my father was treated at the Royal Free Hospital (RFH) and Guys & St Thomas' Hospital (GSTH). I believe that my father did receive some FVIII at GSTH, but the majority of his treatment was at the RFH.
8. I remember my father requiring FVIII treatment quite often. He did go through a period where he tried prophylactic treatment but it didn't really work for him. My father was often in and out of the hospital over the years, and received a lot of treatment there.
9. In or about 1984, I believe there was awareness that FVIII blood products had infections such as HIV. I recall this time because I had my tonsils removed at Poole hospital in 1985 and I was suffering from bleeds after the operation requiring blood transfusions and platelets. The hospital would not believe my mother when she told them that I had low FVIII levels. I remember a random nurse coming into my room and saying 'oh it's fine because now they screen the blood for HIV'. That is my only awareness of it but I don't know when they started screening it. I was about 17 when I had my levels checked again and

I was told I would need to be treated with FVIII for surgery and should ask for recombinant factor, which was free from any infection. My father could therefore have been infected anytime from the 1970s onward.

10. I'm not sure if any information or advice was provided to my father beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection from FVIII. I would imagine that he wasn't told of any risks at that time.

11. I believe in the mid/late 1980s my father found out that he was infected with HIV. I am not sure how my father found out, but I think that we as a family knew as soon as he did. I don't think he carried it alone.

12. I believe that my father was provided with very little information about being infected with HIV and what the infection meant for him. I am aware that my father was told by the doctors that the infection was not transmitted through living with people, coughing, sneezing or any normal family contact.

13. Around the time when my father found out he was infected there were dreadful TV adverts and people were making a huge deal about Princess Diana shaking hands and hugging people who had HIV. The public belief was awful and everyone thought HIV meant death.

14. In or about the mid 1970s I believe my father was diagnosed with Non A, Non B Hepatitis. We were told that he would be safe to come home but we could not share anything like cutlery with him although whilst he was an inpatient at Royal Sussex County Hospital he was barrier nursed.

15. I do not believe that my father received adequate information to help him understand and manage the infection

16. I do not believe that the doctors knew much about HIV and Hepatitis at the time so they couldn't tell my father much about it. It was incredibly difficult because HIV was so public in other walks of life with the adverts and billboards. Sometimes I think it would have been better to not to know. I do

believe that my father should have been told of his infections as soon as the doctors knew.

17. I recall my father telling us that he was informed he couldn't infect us. Doctors were essentially confirming all the adverts at the time were incorrect.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

18. I do not know if my father was infected with anything else other than HIV and Hep C. However I am under the impression that he was probably at risk of being infected with vCJD. The reason why I say this is that I received a letter stating that I am at a high risk of vCJD and I must inform dental surgeons or doctors in advance of any procedure. My father received far more blood products than I ever did.

### **Section 4. Consent**

19. I believe that my father was treated and tested without his knowledge and without being given adequate or full information although I do not have any evidence of this. I believe that he must have had to give consent to be treated though I am not sure. I am also under the assumption that my father was tested for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

20. There were mental and physical effects of my father being infected with HIV and Hep C. Obviously it's not nice for anybody to be told that you have a terminal illness, which is what HIV was at the time. The infection was a death sentence back then.

21. The infections initially had more of a mental effect on my father than a physical effect. He was always a very feisty, slightly eccentric chap and although he was disabled you would never have known. He was a very active person and he didn't let the infection affect his life. We were more active than

majority of people I knew. I did not notice any physical effects from the infection/s until closer to the end of his life.

22. I am not sure if my father had further medical complications or conditions that resulted from the infections.

23. Towards the end of his life my father required more care than he previously needed. He had always been disabled but a very independent person. It's difficult to differentiate between the infection and the effects of the treatment but I would say his symptoms of the infections started to show in the late 1980s. I remember something making him very unwell and unhappy but I don't know if it was the infections or the anti-viral medication he was put on in around 1988.

24. In the last 2 years of my father's life he was very unwell. He lost a lot of weight and was treated with a lot of drugs. I recall when my father was ill and at home he would sleep with his eyes open. My father was never fat but he did lose a lot of weight and was treated with steroids.

25. The end of my father's life saw him stuck inside and in bed because he was so ill so often. Towards the end of his life my father was cared for in 'The Beacon' in Brighton which is a hospice. He would have to go into the hospice when he required the extra care as I was living quite far away at that point. They put pneumonia on his death certificate and they thought they were doing me a favour.

26. I do not know if my father ever received treatment for Hep C. I do remember his treatment for HIV. He was given AZT soon after he was diagnosed and I believe it made him depressed. He had always been really cheerful generally and he was easy going, but when he was on the treatment he was very difficult. As a family I remember we didn't argue but I remember arguing with him in a car park about how miserable the treatment was making him. We spoke about the fact that whilst the treatment was only possibly prolonging his life but it was making him miserable and perhaps living a cheerful life without

the drugs would be better. The whole thing was hideous. It wasn't so much the infections until the end that he struggled with, it was the trials of the antiviral drugs that made him ill.

27. I'm not sure whether my father faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing treatment for his infections.

28. I do not think there were any treatments at the time that should have been made available. I think they were still trialling different drugs at the time.

29. The physical effects of my father's treatment were very visible. He lost a lot of weight because he didn't eat when he was poorly. My father led a very challenging life physically and had remained positive, active and a happy man. Progressively it went downhill following the treatment and his demeanour changed. He was never diagnosed with depression but in hindsight looking at my father before and afterwards, I would say I do believe he was depressed.

30. I am not sure whether my father's infected status impacted upon his medical or dental care for any other conditions.

31. I don't think being infected had a massive impact on my father's private life. He didn't ever want a funeral but it was me that was left to sort the house and the funeral out. I decided that people would want some type of closure so I organised a ceremony at the crematorium in Brighton and it was packed, there were even people standing outside. I don't think his infected status affected how people treated or thought about him. I believe he may have thought it would but his family did not treat him any differently.

32. The impact on me was awful. I was a teenager at the time and I became prickly and unpleasant, which was a huge change from who I was. On more than one occasion I threw beer on people in pubs for making jokes about 'AIDS'. It affects you when you know your father is terminally ill. Even now, if someone discovered that their parents had a terminal illness and there were

constant adverts, billboards and jokes they would be hugely affected by it. HIV is not like cancer, the people infected were stigmatised. I felt I couldn't share what was going on with people because of the stigma that was attached to it. I did tell some friends and in fact when I left school after my A levels when my father was ill, a year into my nursing course I was told I should leave as they didn't think that I would be able to cope.

33. I did keep my father's infection quiet and I believe it was because of the way the media portrayed it at the time. Generally the public perception of HIV was that it was a terrible, terrible thing. Things were slightly different because most of the people affected by HIV were either drug users or gay men. At that time, these groups of people unwittingly became part of those communities which were communities viewed in a very negative way and so those who had been infected through blood products unwittingly became part of the 'group'. None of our families or friends had these kinds of views but other people did.

34. My father wasn't working when he found out he was infected. Due to his Haemophilia my father had a lot of issues with his joints and was quite disabled. He intermittently worked part-time for friends but wasn't employed in a full-time job. I think he carried on doing as much as he could when he could.

35. I was studying when I found out my father was infected and it definitely had an impact on my education. I didn't finish my A levels as a result. I left home and never finished my nursing course. I would imagine it was a largely contributing factor for my poor choices at the time. I would have liked to go into further education and now it is a huge regret.

## **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

36. I do not believe my father ever encountered any difficulties with receiving treatment.

37. I do not know if my father was ever offered any form of counselling or psychological support. If it was offered to my father I do not believe he would have accepted it. I was never offered any form of counselling or psychological support.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

38. I believe in the late 1980s my father received a lump sum of money but I do not know for sure where it came from. It may have been from the Macfarlane Trust. Unfortunately, I do not know how much he received.

39. The Macfarlane Trust also gave me some money to contribute to my father's funeral. I believe that the above payments were the only payments received from the Trust and Funds that were set up.

40. I am unsure as to how my father found the process of applying for financial assistance or how he came to know about it. I assume it was through the Haemophilia Centre at St Thomas' Hospital.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

41. I want answers as to what happened. I would like to know why anyone in their right mind thought buying blood from prisoners - a group of people known to include those at a high risk of having HIV - was a good idea and then to give it to other human beings.

42. I would like to know why they continued using the infected blood products when they knew there was a high risk of infection.

43. Why did they advise me to not use FVIII? This is not about compensation for me. I want people to know they caused my father's death and that he was a person treated carelessly and that he had died as a result.



**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

44. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

45. I do 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

6.2.21

I would like to add a postscript.

The impact of my father's treatment, HIV, AIDS, illness and death continues even now. I am 51 years old, my father died 28 years ago (when he was 54), not emotionally everyday but definitely where I am in life and work.

At the time it was the combination of stigma and scaremongering surrounding HIV/AIDS, and the rollercoaster of how the illness may or may not progress etc and the trials of treatments for it, that made the knowledge of my father's terminal illness even harder for us all to cope with and the impact so intense and far reaching. My determined and positive father was crushed by a nasty disease and its trial medications. It made him weak and sick and caused a horrible death that I am grateful that others likely no longer have to witness.

The enormous effect on me at an influential age affects me still now. My life choices fuelled by anguish, grief, confusion and what I can see with hindsight was depression, mean that my education was disrupted, and ended before I was able to gain any useful qualifications. I work now for just over the minimum wage, to be fair doing a job that I love and am possibly better at because of my early life, but still a role for an unqualified person. The impact of my previously nonexistent self esteem is still present in my relationships.

It is true that my father could, like other fathers do, have died from many other causes at or before 54yo, or by now as he would be in his early 80's. I am generally quite pragmatic around life and death, not over sentimental and realise that it comes to all of us and that some lives are short. However, my father's life was shortened seemingly due to arrogance, greed and a lack of basic respect for patients as humans with lives, families, and the ability to understand their own treatment/health choices. He died not because of 'natural causes' but because of the actions of others and as such it still feels unfair. For him, for me, and for those that knew or loved him.

My fantastic children and my marvelous father never got to meet.

GRO-C

6.2.21