Witness Name: Stephen Biszko
Statement No: WITN1099001
Exhibits: WITN1099002-05
Dated: February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BISZKO

I, Stephen Biszko will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Stephen Biszko and I was born on GRO-C 1958. I live at GRO GRO-C

2. I live with my wife who I have been married to for 8 years and our 4 year old son.

3. I work as a warehouse manager and I have had this job since 1981.

4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Infected

5. I suffer from mild/moderate Haemophilia A. I was first diagnosed following a dental appointment when I was about 6 or 7 years old. When I was diagnosed, I was told that I was not able to play sports at school.

6. I was always in and out of hospital whenever I had a bleed. I had my general check-ups at Lincoln County Hospital (LCH) and the major treatments at Sheffield Children's Hospital (SCH).

7. In the early 1980s, I believe I had my first FVIII treatment when I had my wisdom teeth extracted at the LCH. At this time I did not know that I was being treated with FVIII. My consultant at the time was Dr Adelman. Prior to this, I was given Cryoprecipitate for my bleeds.

8. Since the early 1980s, up until the late 1990s, I was given FVIII at the hospitals as and when I had a bleed. After this, I started administering FVIII myself at home whenever I had a bleed. The doctor at the LCH trained me to do this.

9. Shortly after having my teeth extracted, my eyes went yellow and I was feeling unwell. I was told that I had jaundice. I was going back and forth to the hospital to have blood tests and I recall having numerous blood tests. However, I was never told what caused the jaundice. I believe it cleared up itself.

10. Although I cleared the Jaundice naturally, the symptoms used to come and go. I recall in or about 1988, I started getting symptoms for jaundice again and I was becoming unwell. I went to the hospital and had blood tests done again. This was the time I was told that I had "Non A Non B" Hepatitis (now called Hep C). I was shocked when I was told. I cannot recall if I was provided with any information at the time.

11. However, having looked through my medical records I found a letter from Dr Adelman to Dr Chirodian, dated 23 March 1983 which states the following: 'it would seem that he is recovering spontaneously from a positive 'Non A Non B' Hepatitis transmitted from FVIII plasma concentrate'. A copy of this letter is exhibited at **"WITN1099002"**. I was shocked and horrified when I found this letter in my medical records. The doctors knew in 1983 that I had "Non A Non B" Hepatitis, but they failed to tell me then.

12. I believe I was infected with Hep C when I had my teeth extracted. However, as previously stated I did not know that I was treated with FVIII at this time as previously I was treated with Cryoprecipitate. A letter from Dr Prangnell dated 16 August 1995, confirms that it was very likely that I was infected the first time I received FVIII in January 1983 at the LCH. A copy of this letter is exhibited at **"WITN1099003"**.

13. I had no clue what Hep C was and I believe I was not provided with any adequate information to help me understand and manage the infection. I was not provided with any general information about Hep C and how it would affect me.

14. In or about 1986, there was a lot of media about HIV and how people could have contracted it. The media stated that there was a possibility that Haemophiliacs were at risk of contracting HIV through FVIII blood products. I was extremely worried about what I heard so I got myself tested for it. Luckily the test was negative. I believe the doctors had an opportunity to tell me at this time of my diagnoses of 'Non A Non B' Hepatitis, but they failed to do so.

15. I also found through my medical records that I contracted Hepatitis B (Hep B) following FVIII treatment that I had in 1984. A copy of this letter is exhibited at **"WITN1099004"**. Nobody told me about Hep B. I was not given any information about to how manage the infection. I did not even know I had contracted Hep B until I read my medical records.

16. The information about Hep C and the contaminated FVIII blood products came out in the media before it was relayed to me by the doctors in the 1990s. I got most of the information from the media than the doctors. As I was getting older, it all started to make more sense to me.

17. I do not believe that my parents were provided with any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to Hep C or any infections from using FVIII blood products.

18. I believe information should have been provided to me earlier. I believe we all had a choice and we should have been told about the risks so that we could

decide whether or not to have the treatment. If my parents were told, I believe that they would not have agreed for me to be treated with FVIII. I cannot understand why it was all hidden. It was a simple thing to inform us but no one said anything.

19. If I did not get poorly, I would have never been told about the infection. I was gutted when the doctors told me about the Hep C.

20. Initially, I was not provided with any information about the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection. It was not until I found the information through the media that I found out that there was a risk of someone else being infected through me.

Section 3. Other Infections

21. I have severe Osteoarthritis in my right ankle through constant bleeds and I still suffer from bad fatigue. I believe that the above symptoms are all as a result of the Hep C.

22. In February 2001 I received a letter which states that I received a batch of clotting factor which was contaminated with vCJD. There was not a follow-up consultation in relation to this. However, in my medical records there is a letter, dated 3 October 2004 to my GP, stating that I am required to take special precaution to reduce any possible risk of further transmission of vCJD. Copies of the above letters are exhibited at **"WITN1099005"**. I cannot recall if I had a conversation with my GP about 'taking special precaution'. There is a further letter in my medical records, dated 5 March 2009 which states that I should have been provided with a recent variant CJD update letter. A copy of this letter is also exhibited at **"WITN1099005"**. I cannot recall if I received this letter. The fear of also contracting another deadly infection was always at the back of my mind and I had to research it myself to help me understand it better.

Section 4. Consent

23. I believe I was treated and tested without my knowledge, consent and without being given adequate information. I was not aware that there was a risk of infection from FVIII blood products.

24. I did enter into a trial treatment for Hep C with my knowledge. However, prior to that, I do not know if I was tested and treated for the purposes of research in relation to using FVIII.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

25. The Hep C has had a big mental and physical impact on me. I suffered from depression and as a result was given anti-depressant tablets. I was not aware that other people who were also infected suffered similar symptoms until about 2 years ago. It was difficult as I did not have anyone to talk to about this.

26. I had bad fatigue as a result of the infection which is still ongoing. I also have sleeping problems as a result which affects my ability to work. It only made sense to me in the past 2 years that the above symptoms were as a result of the Hep C.

27. I had tingling sensations in my legs as a result of Peripheral Neurotherapy. This was because of the anti-viral chemotherapy treatment I was on for the Hep C (Ribavirin and Interferon).

28. Soon after my diagnoses, I was told that there was a trial drug available, which was called Interferon. I told the doctors that I wanted to be entered for this, which I was. I was on this treatment for approximately 12 months. Unfortunately it did not work. I recall being very sick from this treatment. As the treatment did not work, I was told to wait and see if a new treatment would become available at a later time.

29. In the early 2000s, after approximately 10 years of the trial treatment I started a course of Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. The treatment course was for

48 weeks. However, after about a month of being on the treatment, I was unable to cope so I had to stop it. During the treatment, I was shaking and feeling hot and cold. I was unable to sleep properly and thought to myself that I would not be able to continue with the treatment as it was really bad. I was working at the time and had to take some time off as I could not cope with it. I was told by the doctors to wait and see if new treatment becomes available.

30. However, in or about the mid 2000s, I resumed the treatment because I just wanted to clear the Hep C. Again the course was for 48 weeks and this time I completed it. This course had the same affects but I learnt to cope with it even though I felt lethargic most of the time. I was still working whilst having the treatment and I believe my work life kept me going. I was told after the treatment that I had cleared the Hep C.

31. I believe that there was a new treatment available for Hep C, but I was not offered it.

32. The infected status had impacted upon my dental care. I attempted to have treatment at a private dental practice, but I was refused. Prior to the infection, my private dentist used to treat me even though I was a Haemophiliac. I now have my dental treatments at the hospital.

33. I recall an incident when I attended the hospital as a result of having jaundice. I knew something was really wrong with me as the doctors and nurses were wearing rubber gloves when they were treating me. This upset me because I was treated this way as a result of my infected status.

34. The Hep C had also impact on my private, family and social life. I had my child late, at the age of 56 years old because I did not think I would live long enough to see my child grow up. Many of my friends have died as a result of contaminated blood products and I was not sure if I would live until 50.

35. There was a huge stigma attached to Hep C at the time. We used to employ drivers back then and they believed what the media portrayed about people who had Hep C. One driver left a newspaper for me with the front page about 'HIV' associated with Haemophiliacs. That upset me. I therefore kept the Hep

C status to myself and close people because of the stigma that was associated with it.

36. When I went back to work and told my employers they were very lenient with me and would let me go home when I was not feeling well. I took approximately 4½ weeks off for sick leave because of the symptoms that I had suffered as a result of the Hep C of the treatment I had.

37. The infection affected a course that I was doing for work. I was doing a 20 week course which I failed because I was not well due to the infection. I had to spend another 20 weeks just to do this course again.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

38. I do not believe I faced any difficulties in receiving treatment for the Hep C.

39. I was not provided with any counselling or psychological support as a result of the infection. I did not even realise that a lot of people who were infected suffered from similar symptoms as me. If I known that such treatment was available, I would have accepted it as I believe it would have helped me a lot mentally instead of coping with it alone.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. In the late 1990s or early 2000s, I received the Stage 1 payment from the Skipton Fund in the sum of £20,000. However, I believed I had to sign a waiver stating that I would not make another claim in the future. I signed the waiver as I needed the money at the time.

41. I only found out about the above financial assistance through my own research. The application process was simple and straight forward.

42. I later applied for the special mechanism payment which I believe I found out through the Haemophilia Society. I receive £4,500 from the EIBSS every quarter and these payments started in about March or April 2018.

43. Until I started receiving the special mechanism payment, the financial assistance was not enough for me especially after what I went through over the past 30 years.

44. I found it awkward to fill in the special mechanism application as it was asking for a lot of information, which brought back a lot of memories.

Section 8. Other Issues

45. I have lost some friends as a result of this scandal. I get very teary and emotional when I talk about it. They are not with me now, so I want answers for them and myself. My friends went through so much without getting any answers.

46. I find it difficult to get travel insurance as a result of the infection, even though I have cleared the infection. I wanted to go on holiday and received a quote for a holiday package of £350. However, when I made an application for travel insurance, I was quoted £600. I thought the travel insurance was excessive and it put me off from going on holidays.

47. Initially I was unable to get life insurance and I was unable to re-mortgage my property. However, I have now managed to find a company that provided me with a policy.

Anonymity

48. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

49. I do not mind giving oral evidence at the Inquiry if needed.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-C ....

Date 20/02/2019

MEDICAL SUMMARY

(This summary is not intended to be exhaustive but sets out key points in the records relevant to the Statement)

Virology

30.10.1980	HBsAg – Neg
	HBsAb – Neg
11.02.1981	HBsAg – Neg
	HBsAb – Neg
02.05.1984	Anti – Hbe – Positive
	Hep B surface antigen – Positive
27.07.1984	HBsAg – Neg
	Anti HBs – Neg
31.10.1984	HBsAg – Neg
	Anti HBs – Neg
19.11.1984	HBsAg – Neg
	Anti HBs – Neg
10.04.1985	HBsAG – Negative
	Anti HBs – Negative
03.04.1986	ANTI HTLV III – Negative
	Anti HBc Detected
03.04.1988	Anti HBs – not Detected
20.12.2005	Hep C Screen – Detected
	Hep C by PCR – Not Detected
23.02.2006	Hep C Screen – Detected
	Hep C By PCR – Not detected
19.06.2007	HIV screen – Non Reactive
	Hep A total Antibody – Detected
	Hep B Surface Antigen – Not Detected
	Hep C Screen – Positive
	Hep