

Witness Name: Jeremy James Russell

Statement No: WITN2936001

Exhibits: WITN2936002-04

Dated: May 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JEREMY JAMES RUSSELL

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I, Jeremy James Russell, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Jeremy James Russell. I was born on [GRO-C] 1984. My address is [GRO-C], Switzerland.
2. I live in Switzerland and work as a carpenter. I live with my girlfriend and we have a son called [GRO-C] who is one and half years old.
3. I make this statement on behalf of my late father, Malcolm Alexander Russell, who was born on [GRO-C] 1956 and died on 12 March 1990 aged only 33. My father contracted Hepatitis B and HIV as a result of receiving contaminated blood products and passed away as a result of AIDS related illnesses.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's 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. My father suffered from severe Haemophilia A. I understand that he received Factor VIII concentrate and he also had home treatment Armour Factorate (Factor VIII).
6. My father was a patient at the Haemophilia Centre in Oxford. His consultants were Dr Rizza and Dr Matthews.
7. My father was infected with Hepatitis B and HIV. I refer to Exhibit **WITN2936002** which is my father's death certificate which records the causes of death as: 1(a) Bronchial Pneumonia, 1(b) Cryptosporidial Infection, 1(c) HIV Infection and Haemophilia. It also states that he died as a result of an accident. I am not really sure what that means.
8. An inquest took place into the death of my father and I refer to Exhibit **WITN2936003** which is a copy of the Inquisition. It states that, "He suffered from Haemophilia and between the 22.10.1979 and 31.7.1984 he contracted an HIV infection as a result of being given contaminated blood products." The coroner concluded he died as a result of an accident.
9. Between 1982 and 1985 my father was in hospital a lot and had a lot of operations due to a bike accident in 1982.
10. In December of 1984, my father received heat treated Factor VIII blood products. Upon review of his personal diary he received a telephone call in October 1986 from Dr Matthews in regards to a faulty batch of Factor VIII that had been issued to him on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1986 with a batch number of A40510. My father had used 16 of the 20 bottles of the Factor VIII that had been given to him.
11. I understand from my mother that my father had a meeting with Dr Rizza on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1985. My mother remembers clearly that my father was extremely worried about it all and felt there was a big cover up going on. I understand

that my father had trusted Dr Matthews and Dr Rizza explicitly and he had always felt very well looked after by the Oxford Haemophilia Centre but by that point he felt that he had been very let down.

12. In August 1985 my father was informed that he was HIV positive.

13. In June or July of 1988 my father became unwell with pneumonia which was a sign that his HIV had developed into AIDS. He was given AZT treatment and my mother told me that my father had really bad side effects.

14. My father died on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1990 as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.

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

15. I am not aware as to whether my father was exposed to any other infections.

### **Section 4. Consent**

16. My father was tested without his knowledge or consent. I refer to Exhibit **WITN2936004** which is a letter from Dr Rizza to my father and it states that there had been 10 tests carried out on my father.

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

17. I was only 5 years old when my father passed away. I can remember that my father would always speak to me and play with me. I did not realise that he had an illness when I was a little boy. I was always told that my father passed away as a result of cancer and I believed this for the majority of my life. I was only told the truth approximately 6 months ago that in fact he had not died of cancer but AIDS. I was absolutely devastated when I found out the truth. I often think I was more at peace with the idea of my father dying of cancer.

18. I was confused and I did not really know what to think at the beginning when my mother told me the truth. My auntie and uncle found out about the Inquiry

and felt we should all support this as it definitely would have been my father's wish for us to speak out on his behalf. My mother could only agree with that which forced her to tell me truth.

19. I can remember a little bit about my father's illness. I can remember that my father was constantly in and out of hospital. I recall not seeing him for a few days and sometimes a few weeks because he was away and admitted to the hospital.

20. I do not remember my father's funeral. However I can remember that my father died at home and it was very upsetting.

21. I feel very angry now I know what my father went through and what happened to him. Why did nobody act quicker once they found out about the first cases in the States and stop importing blood knowing the sources it often came from? Because of this so many haemophiliacs like my father had to die unnecessarily.

22. I was very sad that my mother didn't tell me sooner. I cried because she had kept the truth as a secret from me. Finding out the reality of how he died is horrendous and I must admit I find it hard to cope with. My mother knows she should have told me sooner but kept putting it off as she knew it would upset and unsettle me. Being a parent myself now makes me realise that you will do anything to protect your children. My mother told me all about the stigma attached to Aids at the time and how families got taunted. This makes me realise that it must have been so incredibly frightening and sad for my mother to go through all of that with my father.

23. I wish I had my father still with me. It would have been nice for him to take me to school when I was a child and do the things that fathers usually do. My son GRO-C would have had the best grandfather in the world.

I also had learning difficulties at school and often wished my father could have been there for me too. Later in life I know he could have taught me lots of practical bits.

24. It is hard to think that my father lived with the consciousness of dying and he was aware that he would not see me growing up. My mother is angry about the whole scandal. She knew what really happened and I do not like seeing my mother distraught.
25. My relationship with my mother growing up was very good. She would do anything for me. I could not have asked for a better mother.
26. I find the actions of the medical practitioner's criminal especially the way that my father was infected. What is really annoying as well is that it took a year for my father to find out that he had been infected with HIV after having been tested.
27. My father had a passion for motorbikes and cars and I like to think that I have followed in his footsteps. I love to look at old photographs of my father and also the cars that he had. When I think of my father I know that he had as much of a normal life as he could and that he had lots of interests.
28. When I was growing up, I was told that I was very similar to my father. My mother and my grandmother both still tell me that I am like my father in many ways which is very nice to hear. I am a father myself now and my grandmother tells me that my son, [GRO-C], looks like my father. It makes me happy to know that my father's memory lives on. [GRO-C] likes cars like my father and me.
29. My mother lives around 10 minutes away and she looks after [GRO-C] for 1 and a half days per week. Not every parent does that for a child and it is lovely to have her around.
30. In summary I would like to add that I find it so difficult to express my thoughts and it is not easy for me to speak about this.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

31. My father was party to the litigation that ended in 1991. However he passed away before any offer was made. I believe my mother signed the waiver.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

32. I understand that Mark Mildred who was a solicitor at Pannone Napier was instructed to act on behalf of my father in regards to the HIV litigation. I understand that after a settlement was offered in 1990 the Judge ordered all medical records to be returned to the Health Authority. I am not sure if the medical records still exist.

### **Anonymity**

33. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

34. I would be open to give oral evidence at the Inquiry with my mother Elvira Kuhni who will also be providing a witness statement to the Inquiry.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed.....  
GRO-C

Jeremy James Russell

Dated..... 4.7.2019 .....