

Witness Name: JONATHAN WILKINSON

Statement No: WITN3390001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: JULY 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JONATHAN WILKINSON

I, Jonathan Wilkinson will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Jonathan Wilkinson. I was born on GRO-C 1972 and I live at GRO-C Worcestershire GRO-C.
2. My wife, Rachel Wilkinson (born on GRO-C 1974) is infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from a transfusion with contaminated blood in February 1989.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Rachel's medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

4. When Rachel was 15 years old she was involved in a serious car accident where she sustained a serious head injury and leg injury. She spent hours in surgery at the Worcester Royal Hospital and believes she received a blood transfusion at that time.

5. Around one month later Rachel had a bad reaction to the transfusion and was hospitalised over night with what was, at that time, believed to be meningitis. However the medical practitioners could not get to the bottom of what had made her so very unwell.
6. I met Rachel after the car accident (in February 1989) and our first child Christopher was born on GRO-C 1991. Rachael complained of feeling unwell and tired all the time but life went on and we had our second child Bethany, born on GRO-C 1995. During the pregnancy Rachel was under the care of a Consultant Haematologist as it was identified that she had a low blood platelet count (thrombocytopenia) resulting in her developing multiple bruises. When Bethany was born the medical team took a lot of blood samples from Bethany's heel. We questioned it and were told that it was routine practice. We have recently found out that Bethany's medical notes and records from that period of time have gone missing (as have Rachel's).
7. Rachel continued to feel tired all the time. She kept saying that she felt ill and would suffer with opportunistic infections. It wasn't until quite a few years later after a bout of pneumonia and near death (in 1999/2000) that we were eventually told that Rachel has HIV.
8. Rachel was told sometime in or around the early part of 2000 that she had HIV (having been unwell for over 10 years). Rachel was taken into a room by a Haematologist on her own where she was told in quite an off hand way that she was HIV positive. I was told to wait outside. She was not offered any counselling. Our combined thoughts were immediately with our children. I caught the Haematologist and asked him what the chances were that our children were infected. He gave me a look that said it all. In other words 'high'. We were left in shock.
9. Rachel and I had been married just a couple of years when we received the news of her diagnosis and we had also just purchased our own home. We

had me [GRO-C] tested and had an anxious wait before finding out (to great relief) that we weren't infected.

10. Investigations as to the source of Rachel's HIV infection were undertaken by a clinical nurse specialist under Dr [GRO-D] HIV Consultant. I met Rachel in her seventeenth year. Prior to that she had had very few sexual partners and they were found to be HIV negative upon testing. Rachel has never been a drug user. Dr [GRO-D] intimated that she thought it unlikely Rachel was infected from the blood transfusion as she erroneously informed us at that time that blood and blood products were being screened by 1989, the year of Rachel's operation. However she was unable to come up with an alternative conclusion.
11. Unfortunately (and very oddly) Rachel's notes have gone missing and we are struggling to provide evidence that the operation (and blood transfusion) took place. Our daughter Bethany only learned that her early notes were missing when she applied for a record of her vaccinations at the beginning of the first year of her university paramedic course.
12. Rachel was in surgery for many hours with her parents anxiously waiting for news. They were told that Rachel was suffering heavy bleeding and that they were trying to pick all of the glass out of her head. Rachel still has scars on her head and leg today.
13. Rachel and I had not fully understood and appreciated that she was at the centre of the blood scandal until we began reading the news of the incredible cases of the people providing evidence to the Inquiry. In retrospect there were things along the way over the last 30 years that didn't add up in our minds and we are left with skepticism as to how long the medical professionals knew about Rachel's HIV status.
14. Rachel was in a relationship at the time of the car accident. Her boyfriend's mother worked in a sexual health clinic testing laboratory and told her son that there was a 15 year old girl in [GRO-C] with HIV. She thought nothing of it

at the time but in hindsight we strongly believe that she was referring to Rachel.

15. When Rachel and I started seeing each other I was asked (I would say almost forced) to take an HIV test at a health clinic we both attended together but Rachel was not similarly asked once.

16. As stated, Rachel was not informed of her HIV status despite her poor health for over 10 years and only after a bout of pneumonia that nearly killed her. Dr [GRO-D] informed Rachel that she had the original strain of HIV synonymous with Freddie Mercury and not the later mutated strain.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. Rachel has not been infected with anything other than HIV.

Section 4. Consent

18. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Rachel was unaware that she was
undergoing tests for HIV until the diagnosis was revealed to her. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C]
[GRO-C]

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

19. The impact of the infection on Rachel and our family was immediate and it has been huge. We had two children and we were scared. As a husband it is a hard thing to get your head around. You are left with doubts and questions are left unanswered. Our relationship has been strained and we have had serious arguments.

20. The first house we had just managed to buy when Rachel was told of her diagnosis was lost within 18 months due to financial difficulties. After

struggling with deteriorating health for years whilst trying to hold down her job as a fraud investigator at a local case company, the near fatal bout of pneumonia ended Rachel's working life. We were then unable to rent a property privately as Rachel was not working. We ended up having to move to Nottingham the only area with available council houses. At this time Rachel became pregnant with our third child, [GRO-C] (born on [GRO-C] 2003). The worry and rigmarole involved so that [GRO-C] could be born safely was enormous. We could only thank God that [GRO-C] was born [GRO-C] [GRO-C].

21. Rachel has very serious health issues. She has chronic fatigue and has had many illnesses. She has now been diagnosed with COPD and neuropathy (nerve damage).
22. Life has been very hard for Rachel and me. I have had to work twice as hard because Rachel has been unable to. Moreover I have had to give up work on a number of occasions to look after Rachel and the children because it has become too hard to struggle to keep the job going. For a number of years we went from rented to rented accommodation, dodging money worries as I could never earn enough for us to get by. We had no stability in our lives. They were hard years and they still are to a degree. It has been like kryptonite around our necks. We have no real pensions built up for our retirement and no money to divert. We have no life insurance and one income. The list goes on.
23. I turned to alcohol for many years to try and cope with the stress and have only recently given up. I have developed alcohol associated neuropathy and am on a lot of tablet medication.
24. The stigma associated with HIV/AIDS is so horrendous that we still won't tell people now, only close family and friends know. When we lived in Nottingham we made the mistake of telling a couple of people and the news of it spread across the whole estate. I had also confided in my employer there

and he would not allow Rachel to come within the vicinity of the building for 'health and safety' reasons. The issue escalated to a row between us.

25. Rachel is currently taking anti-depressants, painkillers, neuropathy tablets and HIV medication. She goes through bouts of relative stability in health and then goes down hill and is physically unable to function with daily tasks. Going on holiday is hard work. Rachel is always unwell and on one occasion ended up in hospital. We now look for the nearest hospital if we go away.

26. Our children have been affected. We have told them not to say anything to anyone. Bethany did confide in someone she thought a friend and ended up the victim of bullying. We have only recently told GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C. Rachel's parents worry constantly about her. Rachel's mum does the shopping and I do the housework. Not a day goes by when it does not affect us all.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

27. None of our family members have had any psychological help.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. We have no financial assistance from the trusts and funds.

Section 8. Other Issues

29. There are no other issues.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

30. I am not applying for anonymity and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry. I am willing to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Dated 22/07/2019.....1