Witness Name: Margaret Donnelly
Statement No.: WITN2126001
Exhibits: WITN2126002-009
Dated: 30th September 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARGARET DONNELLY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, Margaret Donnelly, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Margaret Donnelly. My date of birth is GRO-C 1946. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am retired. I intend to speak about my infection of Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and I.

Section 2. How Infected

2. I believe I was infected with hepatitis C through a blood transfusion I received following an ectopic pregnancy that I had in October of 1990. I recall that it was school October week off. I was in GRO-C at the time visiting my mother. I was taken ill and Doctor Lazareth, a local GP

was called and diagnosed a ruptured ectopic pregnancy. I was taken to the local cottage hospital and from there I was flown by helicopter to Southern General in Glasgow. My sister Catherine Maguire and a consultant physician named Doctor John Robinson from the Southern General Hospital who had a clinic at the cottage hospital that day accompanied me in the helicopter. I believe that my medical records show that I received four pints of blood. I recall that my husband may have said that he and my son were told a different amount in the hospital had been received. I believe that the infected blood I received would have been in GRO-C prior to my being transported to the Southern General Hospital. I produce a letter in evidence from the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service showing I received 4 units of blood and that this blood was indeed contaminated. I refer to it as **WITN2126002.**

3. I was operated on at 1430 hours for a left ruptured tubual pregnancy. The operation performed was a partial salpingectomy. I received four pints of blood, before, during and after the operation. One of the units of blood I received was contaminated with hepatitis C and as a result I contracted the infection. This information is contained in my medical notes and I produce a letter dated 8th June, 2006 in evidence. I refer to this letter as **WITN2126003.**

4. I heard sometime after 1995 that the NHS announced that there was to be a 'look back' exercise of blood that had been transfused as some people had become ill after transfusions. At the end of the program there was a helpline so I called it. I received a booklet with some information and contacts. I then decided to see my GP, Doctor Sandy Nixon at Townhead Surgery in Irvine. Doctor Nixon looked up information on his computer and said he thought that since the government had said the 'look back' would check blood donated during the time I had the transfusion he would be notified if there was a problem. He did say that I could contact the Southern General Hospital and tell them when I had the transfusion but I didn't do this as I thought if everyone who had received blood did that the hospital would be overwhelmed.

5. After about two years on a routine visit to Doctor Nixon I asked him about the 'look back' and he said that since he had not heard anything I must be in the clear. Neither he nor I realized that the 'look back' had such a restricted remit.

6. I enjoyed reasonable good health throughout the years between 1990 and 2005. I had some trouble with hypertension and one episode of bronchitis. I was tired and quite lethargic. Sometime in 2000. I can't be more specific, I attended the physiotherapist at GRO-C Hospital in Irvine. I required physiotherapy due to my stiff upper arm joints which made some things I tried to do at home difficult. I didn't know at the time about the potential link between inflamed joints and the hepatitis C virus.

7. In March, 2005 I attended GRO-C Surgery and saw a locum Doctor. I had become worried about all the bruises that I could see on my body and particularly on my arms as I could not account for how I got them. The Doctor told me to make an appointment to have my bloods taken and when I went to get the results I was told to make an appointment to see a doctor.

8. I saw my usual GP Doctor GRO-C. He was asking me a lot of questions and eventually he took my bloods and told me to come back in six weeks. I was asked not to drink any alcohol during this time. Six weeks later I went back to see him and my bloods were taken again with the same instructions. Each time I returned my liver function test was higher than the previous time. I had several abnormal liver function tests between March and October 2005.

9. In October 2005 I had a letter from Doctor GRO-C asking me to make an appointment to see him. This date I remember because my husband had just returned home after having an operation for colon cancer. My GP records have my lab results from the bloods taken on the 4th October 2005 and these show the confirmation that I was Hepatitis C antibody reactive and Hepatitis C PCR Positive. I produce these results from my medical notes in evidence and refer to them as **WITN2126004.**

10. Doctor GRO-C told me he was required to refer me to a specialist Doctor called Doctor Glyn Williams who was a consultant in Infectious diseases at Crosshouse Hospital Kilmarnock for further investigation.

11. Sometime after the 6th February 2006 Doctor GRO-C told me that he had received a letter dated 6th February, 2006 from Doctor Myrtle Peterkin the Consultant Haematologist, of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service saying she would be investigating why his two letters dated 8th November 2005 and the 13th January 2006 to the SNBTS had not been answered. These letters were alerting her to my Hepatitis C diagnosis and asking her to investigate my blood transfusion history. I produce a copy of this letter dated 7th February, 2006 in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2126005.**

12. Doctor Peterkin advised Doctor GRO-C that I would need to write to the Southern General Hospital authorising the release of my blood transfusion history to the SNBTS to enable them to investigate and test my blood transfusions.

13. In April 2006 I attended my first clinic with the consultant in Infectious Diseases at Crosshouse Hospital, Doctor Williams. Following this appointment I had an ultra sound on my liver which showed some enlargement and some damage to my liver. Doctor Williams recommended a 48 week treatment of Interferon and Ribavirin but said that it should take place within the next five years. I produce a letter dated the 10th July, 2006 relating to my appointment with Doctor Williams and note that it was recommended that I undergo treatment over the next 2-3 years. I refer to this letter as **WITN2126006**.

14. I started Interferon and Ribavirin treatment in March 2008 and it lasted till February 2009.The side effects of the treatment were dreadful. I had fungal infections over most of my body, alopecia, severe exhaustion, insomnia and angry and irritable moods. It was a very stressful time. My husband was very ill during this time with terminal cancer and he died in June 2009.

I produce in evidence a letter from the specialist nurse at Crosshouse Hospital confirming I started the treatment on the 28th March, 2008 and my severe side effects. I refer to this letter as **WITN2126007.**

15. I was told the treatment had failed in October 2009. From that time until I started a new treatment in July 2015 I attended at Crosshouse Hospital regularly. Treatment started on the 28th July 2015 for twelve weeks until 19th October 2015. The treatment was successful. I believe the treatment was called Riboflavin in tablet form. The symptoms in terms of the side effects were similar to the first lot of treatment although I would say not a severe. I was monitored periodically and discharged from the Infectious Disease clinic at Crosshouse hospital, Kilmarnock in October, 2017. I produce in evidence a letter from my medical notes regarding the treatment I received and refer to it as **WITN2126008.**

16. I do not believe that any real advice was offered at the time I was diagnosed. The consultant at the time, Doctor Williams, said not to tell anyone. I found the whole thing to be ridiculous. I don't know if the purpose was to make me feel guilty. My main worry was that my husband had to go to hospital to see a consultant to have a liver function test. I thought he could have been tested for hepatitis C. It was a long time later that the GP tested him and I believe it was just that his liver function wasn't good after some operations.

17. I believe that there was a letter written to the consultant from my doctor and it was something about not leading a promiscuous life. They seemed to imply that I had misbehaved in some way.

18. I received no advice about my infection other than not telling anyone. By the time that they told me not to tell anyone, I had already read up on hepatitis C. My son is a real computer whiz. I recall going to my GP who said that I knew more than he did. I believe that there may have been some mention of watching and being careful of cutting yourself. I would say that I was so hyperaware of cuts, I almost ended up cutting myself more after

this diagnosis. This would often happen when I was doing the likes of peeling potatoes.

19. Doctor Williams at the Infectious Disease Clinic at Crosshouse Hospital said there was a treatment available that was in the testing stage. They said that because I had type 2 and because I had my small son to look after, it would not be suitable. They said they would start it within five years, but they would wait until my child was a bit bigger.

Section 3. Other Infections

20. I was infected with Hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

21. I am not aware of blood being taken at any point between when I was diagnosed and when I received my transfusion. I have had blood pressure so they may have taken blood for that and I may just not remember.

Section 5. Impact

22. When I was on my treatment with Interferon and ribavirin it was horrendous and I was tired and irritable for much of this time. I believe that my husband and children gave statements to the Penrose Enquiry about what I was like while I received the treatment. My children are Carmen (date of birth GRO-C 72), Martin (date of birth GRO-C 75), Mhairi (date of birth GRO-C 77) and Kieran (date of birth GRO-C 84). I think at the time I was not really aware of how I behaved. I have been told I became almost a different person.

23. Around the time that I received treatment, my husband also had chemotherapy and was operations in relation to cancer that he had. It was not a good time for the family.

24. In terms of how I coped with my diagnosis, it was something that was often put to the back of my mind. It was my husband that was really ill so that was more important. I had bigger things to consider at the time. When I was first diagnosed I decided that my husband did not actually have to know. I believe I took some time after my diagnosis before deciding to tell him. I am not entirely sure when I told him.

25. Our children were told around the time that I told my husband. I believe it was hardest for my youngest child but the others were older at time were young adults so it was easier for them. I believe they could remember that when I was in hospital they were told that I had something wrong with me. I told them to keep it to themselves when I did properly tell them. A few of them weren't living at home at the time of my diagnosis.

26. My oldest son Martin is a GRO-C and he went searching and found an inquiry in Scotland. A civil servant said to be "Why hasn't this been publicised?" I believe that they thought everyone would be dead. I believe I discovered something along the lines of the blood being heated in England but not in Scotland as they thought this was too expensive. I believe that Scotland had enough blood to use what it had without having to buy into the blood.

27. My main gripe is that no one has ever said sorry or accepted any blame. I recall reading a website for those with tainted blood where there was a school for boys with haemophilia and how all of them were dead now having received contaminated blood.

28. I honestly don't think I really suffered all that much mentally. I did not see any point on dwelling on things. I prayed a lot and that got me through it. I had a lot of brothers and sisters I could talk to and a good support network of friends. I had friends that I told and I did not keep this a secret from them. I thought it was nonsense that I was not helped more by medical staff. I did notice that some nurses put on a big show of putting on gloves when they dealt with me. There is a nurse I know who is a friend of mine

and they said the gloves just really aren't needed. Most are like the one I know but there are some who make a show of it all.

29. I occasionally had to go to Ayrshire Central and the nurse there always made a big thing about it. By this I mean Ayrshire Central Hospital. I recall overhearing two guys waiting to go in and the nurse said "Margaret it will be a while" and the two men whispered about "What do you think she's here for?"

30. I would not say that our social or private life was affected by my diagnosis.

31. My husband was in the military, he retired in 1988. I spent most of the time looking after the children while he was away doing military work.

32. I do not recall there being any effect on my dental treatment when I was diagnosed with hepatitis C. Someone that I knew had a friend with hepatitis C, and when they were spoken to it was said that her husband wouldn't let her go to the doctors because of the stigma of people finding out that she had hepatitis C.

33. I think I had it easy in comparison to a lot of other people. I recall that my hair got thin during treatments and I hated that. I'm aware that the interferon was at one time used for some types of cancer. At the time, it was said that interferon was the worst type of medication to be on. There were different treatments for different people.

34. I believe that I was not entirely aware of the effect that my diagnosis had on our family life together. I recall that in Charlie and the children's Penrose enquiry statements it seemed to show that it did actually have an effect on them. I believe that they knew their father was dying and they were also worried about me as well.

35. My children, in the Penrose Inquiry statement, and my husband, spoke about how I spoke to people and said that I was angry when I spoke to

people. I was not conscious of it, but I've been told that I lacked patience for people at the time when I was ill. I probably did get down, at times, about it and maybe when I was down I was a little bit more irritable.

36. I do not believe that my illness and diagnosis had any effect on my children's performance in school. Two of my children went to University and I think one was at school when everything was happening.

37. In terms of if the advice I received was adequate, I would say there was not much advice. I believe I gave blood every 6 months to be tested. I think over time the atmosphere got more positive and there was less of a doom and gloom atmosphere about my treatment.

38. While I understand that some people often felt the cold when they had hepatitis C, I only really feel the cold now that I am clear. Some people had terrible symptoms so I feel that in some ways I have been quite lucky.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

39. At no point was any counselling offered. It may be good to speak to someone but I am not a sort of person to think in a 'poor me' sort of way. I know that my husband Charlie benefited from going to groups in relation to cancer charities.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. I terms of any funding I did not get anything through the Caxton Fund as I believe you had to be on benefits or show some form of hardship.

41. I did receive some funds from Skipton and I believe that I was given a form by my GP that he had partially filled in and I had to complete. I recall I got one lump sum payment of £20,000. I believe that this was all quite easy. When I was diagnosed with cirrhosis, I received another £50,000. Now I get a monthly payment. This can be different amounts depending on the

situation and I believe families can now get more through the new Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme. There is mention in my medical notes that I have cirrhosis as a complication of the hepatitis C. I produce mention of my cirrhosis in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2126009.**

42. This was all quite an easy process and the money was paid by automatic transfer. As far as I understand there is no need to reapply and the people in Scotland do generally get more than those who were infected in England.

43. I believe there were certain conditions that had to be met for Caxton. You had to be on a low income and as this did not apply to me I never really looked at it when I found out that I was not eligible, as far as I understood it.

Section 8. Other Issues

44. I have nothing else to add.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C
Margaret M Donnelly GRO-C

Dated Oct 27, 2020