

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEOFF NOON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2019. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Geoff Noon will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Geoff Noon. My date of birth is GRO-C 1956. I'm 63 years old and divorced.

2. How Affected

1. I will be telling the Inquiry about my late friend John David Hill. We knew each other as children, from the age of five, and had remained close friends all of his life. One night, on the Christmas Eve of 1979, John and I had been in the Golden Cross, in Coventry town centre. At the end of the evening we were asked if we wanted to go to a party in Kersley (a village to the north of Coventry). I declined but John accepted.

Unfortunately, on the way to the party John was in a car accident. He was flung out of the back window of the car. He was rushed to the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital where he was given a blood transfusion. I remember going to visit him in hospital on Christmas Day.

2. I believe John was infected with Hepatitis C, amongst many other liver infections, that night. He only became aware of his illness in the 1990's when he was informed that there was no cure for his illness; effectively a death sentence. No information or advice was given to him beforehand about the risks of being exposed to infection. At the time the hospital was unaware of the blood contamination. But very soon after hundreds of blood transfusion the infection became clear. Suddenly everything changed.
3. Through the years, John's health declined very quickly. His local doctor's surgery was the Green Lane Medical Centre in Coventry. After the initial consultations all medical records went missing.
4. He then told me about what had happened because of the blood transfusion after the accident. He was always asking me to look after his girls. Angela, Lotte and Julia.
5. He went to many different hospitals, the final one being in Derriford Hospital, in Plymouth.
6. John was in hospital often, he was very ill for several years. Once he showed me his legs. They were black. That's when he confided in me about his imminent death. He died in March 2009 seven days later. He was on a farewell trip to say goodbye to his friends.

3. Other infections

1. John had many blood related infections including Hepatitis C. He developed liver problems. Then Peripheral Neuropathy about two to three years before he died, all result of Hepatitis C and other blood related diseases.

4. Consent

1. John gave his consent for the blood transfusion as it was needed to save his life. However, he did not consent to being infected with contaminated blood. I don't think he was tested or treated for the purposes of medical research.

5. Impact

1. John died in March 2009 in Tangier, Morocco whilst on his farewell tour. I believe he collapsed and was rushed to hospital. John knew he was dying.
2. The main vein in his stomach had burst and he later passed away from internal bleeding.
3. He left behind a wife and three children who were all devastated. I understand that in the years leading up to his death they struggled financially due to John being out of work. Unfortunately, he didn't receive his State Pension and so couldn't leave anything to them. He had no means to provide.
4. The impact on John physically and mentally was immense. He was a shadow of his former self when he died. At one stage he was asking me to look after his girls, which I always have done.
5. I believe the impact of John's death had a profound effect on GRO-C his brothers GRO-C His dad has now lost two of his children. His daughter died in a car accident on the day she got engaged. This is dividing and destroying families.

6. Treatment/Care Support

1. I recall that he was very ill for a number of years; he was always tired and had a heavy flu. He was treated firstly in Holland (where he was first diagnosed) but he returned to the UK to seek treatment. When he went to his local GP Surgery, the Green Lane Medical Centre he found out that his medical records detailing his time there had gone missing.
2. He was then treated in London before being treated at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth between 2003 and 2009. At one stage John had to go to King's Hospital in London for a liver transplant. Unfortunately, when he developed liver problems there was sadly no treatment available to him. The only treatment available was chemotherapy or Interferon. However, his blood platelets were too low to undergo any of these treatments. He was given five years to live but he exceeded that by five years.
3. Counselling was never an option in the 1980's. He tried not to change his outlook in life but John did get depressed.

7. Financial Assistance

1. John found out about the Skipton Fund through his friends. He had problems accessing treatment initially because the doctor completing the form was unable to confirm that he had viewed his medical records.
2. At some stage John and his father found out about the Skipton Fund. I believe that he was given a one off and final payment of £20,000.

8. Other Issues

1. John was a good friend to me, and life isn't the same now he's gone. He was a very clever man, a qualified lawyer, although he never practiced. He was also a shrewd business man; he even managed a couple of quite successful bands. I suppose he lived everyday pushing himself to his limits, which I can understand

why now. Despite his success, I would say that his life was somewhat blighted by the effects of his infection.

2. The families deserve justice for what has happened. I think John's surviving family members deserve compensation and not just a little but a lot. For years, John was basically left to his own devices without knowing he had an infection. If he had been made aware of his infection earlier then it's possible that his blood platelets wouldn't have been untreatably low.
3. The Government needs to take responsibility for what happened. I truly believe that what they're trying to do is run clock down so that those who were infected will pass away and so no longer be able to tell their stories. The truth needs to come out and those accountable need to be identified.
4. It's been 10 years since John died but it seems like yesterday. I lost my best friend of over 50 years because of the National Health Service. I believe they tried to destroy all of the evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated: 19TH MARCH 2019.