

Witness Name: Hannah Johnston

Statement No.: WITN3504001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 13/12/2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF HANNAH JOHNSTON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 19th June 2019.

I, Hannah Johnston, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Hannah Johnston. My date of birth is GRO-C 1995 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a qualified marketing professional who currently works for a construction company. I intend to speak about the effects of my father, Paul Johnston's, infection with Hepatitis C on our family. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.
2. At this time, I am not seeking legal representation.

3. My mother Catherine Johnston, has also given the Inquiry a statement so at times I will refer to her statement. (**WITN0158001 refers**).

Section 2. How Affected

4. Growing up my knowledge of Dad's illness was that he had leukaemia. I remember being told not to touch his toothbrush or other personal items and I still live by that mantra today. As a child, I always knew that there was something wrong but I was never informed. I was 4 years old when my Dad was treated for Hepatitis C and all of this happened. For further details please see my mother's statement. (**WITN0158001.**)

Section 3. Other Infections

5. I do not ever recall either of my parents mentioning that my father Paul, contracted any other infections as a result of contaminated blood.

Section 4. Consent

6. I cannot answer this question as I was a child when my father was being tested and treated for Hepatitis C therefore please refer to **WITN0158001** for further details.

Section 5. Impact

7. I would have had a close relationship with my Dad. I would have spent a lot of time with him because we liked the same things. He wanted a boy so he basically turned me into one; I would have gone shopping to Galway with mum and to the sports shop with dad. We also bonded over things like football.

8. Before Dad was infected with Hepatitis C he played semi-professional football but he had to stop because of his illness with leukaemia. Had he not been infected with Hepatitis C, all of us could have lived completely different lives. During his treatment for Hepatitis C my Dad became an alcoholic who couldn't control himself. He was very angry and frustrated that he was infected. Although, he never hurt us his behaviour and manner changed and completely affected our family life.
9. Growing up I just thought that my Dad was an alcoholic because I didn't know at the time about his infection with Hepatitis C. When he was undergoing treatment, my mum organised a childminder to take care of us; everyday, we would go to her house. Mum would have made sure that we were never left alone in the house with our dad because the Hepatitis C treatment made him so depressed and this in turn could cause his behaviour to be erratic.
10. When my Dad was alive, I used to always worry about him and what mood he would be in. When we were both out in public I used to worry about what he might do, which might embarrass me in front of my friends. I would also get worried whether he was able to get a seat because, in the end, he was so unsteady on his feet. In the end he needed a wheel chair but the week we actually got it was the same week he passed away, so her never got to use it.
11. The other issue that I would be concerned about if he went to a football match on a Saturday, was that he could not stop drinking once he went to the pub. It was also similar when I would bring friends over to the house. I would be worried that if he'd been drinking, he would get angry over something small.
12. There would be other occasions where I would be walking down the main street, which was full of pubs, from school. I would be worried if I bumped into him and if he would see me and be drunk

in front of my friends. I remember when I did bump into him, he would just respond to me by saying 'to keep you right I will throw you a tenner to keep a secret.' I didn't know any different this seemed normal to me.

13. At the time, I resented him for his behaviour, we used to have heated arguments. Sometime he would leave the door open when he came back from a night of drinking. I had really bad nightmares at the time and so I would often get into bed with Mum and Dad. Often, before I would go into their room, I would check if the front door was open and if not, I would close it after my Dad. My older sister Rebecca also struggled with sleeping. We both found it very difficult to sleep at night particularly when he was not living in the house, in 2008.

14. The impact of my Dad's illness on my sister Rebecca has been significant. As a child, when she attended Primary school she was very happy, she loved playing games and was very sociable. She was also very academic and clever; she had her own poems published in books. Unfortunately, my sister's personality changed around the age of 12 where she lost interest in school and started to spend more time with friends.

15. This change in outlook may have been because we moved house when she was 11 and we could no longer see our childminder, Patricia after school. Patricia would always spend time teaching us after school. We were always at her house and she was like a granny to us. We were very close due to the time we spent with her. But then we had to move from a two-storey house to a bungalow. Obviously, Mum knew what was coming with regards to the progression of my Dad's illness but we all loved that house and Patricia.

16. In and around that time, my sister also experienced several traumatic events where several close friends passed away which took its toll on her [GRO-C] When she found out about our Mum's breast cancer that also caused her a considerable amount [GRO-C] Rebecca felt that everyone always left her and now since Dad has passed away, that too has negatively affected my sister' [GRO-C]

17. Even, today my sister cannot talk about our father's death, it is too painful for her. Looking back at my childhood, we didn't have a normal life with Mum or Dad. They tried to maintain a family perspective but dad's illness and the treatments made it almost impossible and that's the way it was; we didn't know anything different.

18. I don't know how my mother coped with my Dad's illness, particularly during his treatment for Hepatitis C. My mum was trying to rear two young kids and protect a husband – who was capable of trying to kill himself everyday - with no support. My mum is very strong and I could not have done what she has done. I think all of the stress of taking care of my Dad was instrumental in causing my Mum to contract breast cancer.

19. My Dad's drinking and anger really took a toll on the relationship he had with my mum. They were fighting and arguing all the time. I would have given my bed to Dad and slept with Mum for a long time. He would have spent a lot of time in my room, which led to them being separated for a period of time. Anything would set my Dad off, the stupidest things but it was just because he was so frustrated. You would pray that he would be in good form but it was just so unpredictable.

20. My sister and I were always panicking during the final few years of our Dad's life. Would today be the day? I would dread getting calls

because I was so terrified I would hear that the time was upon us. I lost a lot of weight from all of the stress and I missed three semesters of University. Luckily, I was able to catch up without delaying my degree.

21. I would suffered at the time from a lot of tension headaches and had insomnia. On one occasion, I couldn't sleep for ten days. That was the culmination of when Mum had cancer, Dad was sick and I was studying for my GCSE's. When it did happen and I got the call I totally freaked out. I couldn't sit in the room with my dad when he was dying. I couldn't watch my best friend die, despite the times when I could have killed him, that is not how I wanted to remember him.

22. Although there were days that my Dad could handle it, looking back at it now, he drank because of the situation; my dad knew the Hepatitis C was going to kill him. We were not allowed to tell anybody. I was completely unaware of my Dad's infection until I was 16. Nobody knew except for a few close family members.

23. My friends just thought he was a raging alcoholic when he died and everybody still holds this opinion of him. But really, the Hepatitis killed him, its just nobody knows and this bothers me to this day because my Dad was such a well-known man about the town. His situation has never been put right.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

24. I cannot answer this question as I was a child when my dad was sick so please see my mother's statement for a detailed account, **(WITN0158001 refers)**.

25. I have never been offered counselling to date by doctors because of what has happened to my father. However, due to my mother's

persistence after his death, I was able to see a bereavement counsellor on several occasions.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

26. I am not aware of any financial details relating to my Dad, for further details please see **WITN0158001**.

Section 8. Other Issues

27. I think it's so unfair that it has taken until now for a public inquiry to happen. People used to think my Dad was such an angry and difficult man but if there had been an earlier public inquiry when he was alive, it would have made such a difference to him and possibly people's perception of him. In hindsight, my Dad needed and wanted to tell his story.

28. We had a cleaner who worked in the house and she obviously wanted to get on with her work but my Dad would just sit down and tell her his story of how he became infected with Hepatitis C. On another occasion, which is funny now looking back at it but wasn't at the time, was when a charity cold-called my Dad and he kept them on the phone for two hours trying to explain that he needed aid because of his infection.

29. My Dad was just so irate that he was given contaminated blood. He realised the effects on the family and in the end, it totally destroyed his way of life. From being such a fit man and so full of energy to where he was no longer active and couldn't even leave the house.

30. I also feel sorry for the doctors and nurses that have to recall events that happened 40 years for the Inquiry, as it is difficult to remember everything.

31. I hope that by the time the Inquiry is finished that there was a reason why my Dad was infected and that it won't happen again. People must stop letting other people die.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

13/12/19