

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FREDERICK ALAN STEVENS

I, Frederick Alan Stevens, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Frederick Alan Stevens and my address is known to the Inquiry. My date of birth is GRO-C 1953. I live with my wonderful wife Kay.
2. I believe that I was infected with Hepatitis C following my use of contaminated Cryoprecipitate.
3. **This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.**

Section 2. How Infected

4. I have mild Haemophilia A and was initially treated with Cryoprecipitate from the 1970s, on demand, before being moved onto Factor VIII in the 1990s.
5. I was treated at the Royal Cornwall Hospital under Dr Murell.

6. I was not provided with any advice or information regarding the risk of infection from Cryoprecipitate. I was immediately aware that this was a "*wonder drug*" affording me both freedom and normality following bleeds.
7. Post my infection with Hepatitis C (Non-A Non-B [NANB] Hepatitis as it was known then) I believe that I was told that there was a risk of infection from Cryoprecipitate but by this time it was too late for me to do anything about it. In or around 1984/1985 the medical experts appeared a little more reluctant to prescribe me Cryoprecipitate.
8. I believe that I was infected with NANB Hepatitis in the early to mid 1980s. I began to feel very unwell from the mid 1980s and I became progressively more poorly in the late 1980s. I was very sick and weak. It reached a point where I was so exhausted that I was unable to stand without collapsing.
9. I therefore went to see my GP in or around 1990. Following some blood tests my GP said "*oh you have Hepatitis*". I was alone when my GP broke this news to me. The GP did not really know anything about Hepatitis and I just presumed that it was Hepatitis A and that I had caught it from sewage contaminated water because we had had a problem with our water about a month earlier.
10. The GP then referred to me the Haematology Department at Royal Cornwall Hospital; I attended about 12 months later in or around 1991. I was told that it was Hepatitis C or D and that it was new form of Hepatitis. I think they said D but I could be mistaken. I was told that I had contracted the new form via blood products and I believe that I saw either Dr Blundell or Dr D Creagh. I was aware that my liver could be affected but I did not receive any other information in terms of allowing me to manage or understand my infection.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I received a letter from Dr Creagh in or around 2010 advising that I had been put at risk of vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

12. Blood was taken regularly from me at the Haematology Clinic and I was not told for what reason it was being taken.

13. I have had my blood used for the purpose of research but I was specifically asked about this and was able to consent.

Section 5. Impact

14. I became very poorly in the late 1980s but I managed to continue working at the South Western Electricity Board where I was employed. My health continued to plummet and I remember feeling very sick and lethargic which was in contrast to my GRO-C GRO-C who were also infected with Hepatitis C but escaped relatively unscathed in terms of symptomatology.

15. I have managed to deal with mental effects of my infection due to my strong Christian faith. I always believed that God would help me and this allowed me to tackle the infection.

16. I underwent a 12 month course of Interferon treatment for my Hepatitis C in about 1993/1994. Following conclusion of this course my Hepatitis C was undetectable for a period of about 3 months. A blood test then showed that it had effectively returned.

17. I was therefore put on another course, this time for 6 months, in or around late 1994. I experienced exactly the same pattern as before in terms of my Hepatitis C being undetectable for 3 months and then returning.

18. Both courses of treatment were supervised by Dr Hasani at Royal Cornwall Hospital.

19. Following the second failure Dr Husani told me that there was a new treatment which was Interferon combined with Ribavirin and that this may prove successful. I commenced a 12 month course of this in 1995. In May 1996 the treatment was stopped because I was told that I had successfully cleared the virus after 10 or 11 months of treatment.

20. The side effects were the same for all three treatments in that my lethargy and nausea increased. The treatments also gave me terrible depression. I would say that the cure in terms of enduring these 3 treatments was worse than suffering the effects of the Hepatitis C.

21. I managed to continue my work in telecommunications throughout my three treatments despite it being a huge battle. I told myself that each day I managed to get through meant that one less day of treatment remained.

22. Whilst I was on the third treatment I had to go to the hospital every 2 weeks for blood tests and I found this quite invasive, despite how familiar I was with having blood taken. I remember seeing one man in the waiting room who looked like death warmed up and I thought well I am probably managing it better or managing to look better than him.
23. Despite the fact that I was told that I had cleared the virus, Dr Creagh told me only this year that I still have antibodies for Hepatitis C. He is currently monitoring me in this regard as it may possibly be the case that I am unable to "*clear*" the virus.
24. Today, although I feel better than I did, I still feel very tired and struggle to get things done. I thought that, following conclusion of the treatment, I would feel well again but this has not proven to be the case.
25. I find myself sleeping a lot more now and I am very frustrated because my mind wants to do things but my body stops me. We had a house fire about 3 months ago and are still struggling to put things right after this. I am coming to the mind set that I can only do a few tasks each day. It is upsetting because I know people who are 10 or 15 years older than me who are so much fitter than me.
26. I also suffer with diabetes and prostate cancer. I had a biopsy on my prostate in October 2015 which led to pneumonia and sepsis and I was lucky to have pulled through. I had been kept in overnight on a precautionary basis as a result of my Haemophilia and this turned out to be what saved my life. I thank the Lord that I am alive today.
27. I commenced 7 ½ weeks of radiotherapy for my prostate cancer in March 2016 and I also underwent hormone treatment which only finished in March this year. I experienced hot flushes and put on weight as a result of these treatments.
28. I have never shied away from telling people about my infection. I have never kept it a secret and was open about it with my work colleagues as well. My wife did ask me if she could catch it and that was an initial concern but we're fine about this now. My previous wife of 13 years never caught it.
29. My employer was very good about my infection and always asked if there was anything that could be done to support me which included the fact that he allowed me to come in an hour later than everyone else. I was happily pensioned off at the age of 52.

30. I am unable to obtain life insurance. In fact, obtaining any type of insurance is not really feasible because it is so expensive so never an option which does not seem fair given that I was infected through absolutely no fault of my own.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

31. I have not suffered any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment or care as a result of my Hepatitis C.

32. I have never been offered counselling and I don't think it would be of any use at this late stage if it was offered now.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. I believe that I found out about the Skipton Fund via GRO-C.

34. I received the Stage 1 Payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund in the early 2000s and I used some of this to pay off my mortgage.

35. I did not apply for any grants from the Skipton Fund.

36. I do not have much to say about the Skipton Fund given that I had limited dealings with them. What I will say however is that it was a cheap payoff. I would gladly return the money to have my health back.

37. I started receiving monthly payments from EIBSS about 3 years ago. I was then successful in obtaining the Special Category Mechanism Payments relatively recently. I also receive the winter fuel payment of around £500.

38. I would like to add that I receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and I was successful in obtaining the high rate mobility award about 12 years ago. However, I believe that they are about to take the high level award away which would mean that I would lose my car. It is quite upsetting as I am able to get out and about with the car and my wheelchair fits in the back.

Section 8. Other Issues

39. I would like the Government to admit that they were wrong and I want Kenneth Clarke held to account. I believe that the actions and decision making of some influential bodies/people led to widespread death.

40. Although I receive financial support from EIBSS it is concerning because if this were taken away I would be left with nothing. I believe that those infected and affected by this tragedy require just compensation.

41. I find social media sites, such as those operated by Tainted Blood, very useful in keeping me abreast of relevant developments.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

42. I do not wish to apply for anonymity but I have removed my address from this statement. My address is known to the Inquiry.

43. I would like to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..

GRO-C

Dated.....

12-09-2019