

Witness Name: Patricia O'Shea

Statement No: WITN3731001

Dated: 13th October 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PATRICIA O'SHEA

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 17th September 2019. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Patricia O'Shea, will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Patricia O'Shea. My date of birth is GRO-C 1949 and my address is known to the Inquiry. My husband Terence Michael O'Shea was diagnosed with hepatitis C in July 2016. In August 2019 my husband was diagnosed with liver cancer and he has been given three to six months to live. It has left me emotionally traumatised and distressed.

2. How Infected

1. My husband became infected with hepatitis C when he received a blood transfusion at Cardiff Royal Infirmary in October 1979 after he fell

off a ladder and broke his back and ankles. At first his symptoms were so vague the doctors couldn't find anything wrong with him. He was so tired. All he could do was stay in bed and watch TV. One day in 2015 he came downstairs and said that he had thrown up blood in the toilet. He then he threw up blood in front of me. He had to be hospitalised at the University Hospital for Wales (UHW) for a portal vein detachment in his liver. He stayed in hospital for a week. During this time the doctors kept talking to him about alcohol, even though he had no previous history of alcohol abuse. I thought it was strange that on the ward where they put my husband there were posters warning about hepatitis C along the corridors. At no time did the hospital indicate that hepatitis C was suspected or that my husband should have been tested for this.

2. Two months after the bleed, my husband was still going downhill as he was exhausted just going to the bathroom. He wasn't able to do anything or go anywhere which was concerning as you are meant to get better after going in to hospital.
3. I found out my husband had hepatitis C sometime in July 2015. My husband and I had not received any information until we saw Dr Andrew Godkin and I was never given any information about the risk of contracting the infection. I only knew what I found out online. I was tested for hepatitis C when I read about getting it done online. Fortunately the result of the test was negative. My husband was only told not to drink alcohol as they believed he was a chronic alcoholic.
4. I don't believe that the information I was given was adequate. My husband and I were pretty much flying solo the entire time as everything was so covered up. It was so hard to find information on the subject. Around two to three months after my husband came out of hospital in 2015 we both started to notice that he kept getting asked about how much alcohol he drank by hospital staff. Then six months later he saw a doctor who told him that if he carried on drinking in the

way that he was, he would not live long. They had put on his file he was an alcoholic! This upset him greatly so I contacted the hospital about this and they later apologised to him. It took the hospital a long time to remove alcoholism from my husband's file. He recurrently had to explain to the doctors that he wasn't an alcoholic and it wasn't until a year ago that it was finally taken off his file.

5. I feel that my husband should have been given more information about his liver cirrhosis as he was led to believe alcohol was the main cause of it. I feel that the way the UHW treated us was abysmal. My husband and I have no idea whether or not they knew about my husband's hepatitis C. If it wasn't for my husband's GP we would still be none the wiser. The hospital was clearly aware of the hepatitis C infections as they had put posters up in the wards.

3. Other infections

1. My husband hasn't been diagnosed with any other infections besides hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood products. There is nothing to suggest he has anything else but for all we know he could have contracted AIDS or another virus and they haven't picked it up as the hospital literally got blood off the street.

4. Consent

1. I believe it is a possibility that my husband could have been tested without his knowledge or consent as we had no information at the time. I think the hospital were aware my husband had hepatitis C but just didn't tell him. It is a simple blood test so surely the hepatitis would have been picked up considering how often he went back and forth to the hospital for tests.

5. Impact

1. When I discovered my husband had hepatitis C it didn't impact me as much as I thought it would as I am quite an independent person. However as he was so exhausted all the time it meant that everything we did was based around the house. We couldn't make any social plans and he was unable to play with his great grandson as he was too tired and fatigued.
2. Once he found out he had hepatitis C he asked me if he was going to be ill forever. I didn't know if he was going to recover or be bed ridden. Before the hepatitis C cleared up his life was just an existence in the bedroom. I felt sorry for him as he was so distraught with the situation. I have recently discovered my husband has terminal liver cancer which has emotionally shredded me.
3. I feel his treatment could have been started a lot sooner. It took the hospital months to discover the hepatitis C after he was initially hospitalised with his portal vein detachment. There was no investigation carried out as to why he was still ill following his hospitalisation and if he hadn't chased it up with his GP he would still be none the wiser.
4. Once my husband had his diagnosis and he recovered he was able to do normal things like walk our dog. However things changed in the middle of July when my husband had a stomach infection and on the 14th August he was rushed into hospital with a bleed on his oesophagus. He spent two weeks in hospital where he recovered slightly but relapsed again and was diagnosed with liver cancer. My husband is no longer able to drive and we have to rely on others for lifts.

5. My husband was given Harvoni to treat his hepatitis C but I feel that if the hospital had discovered his infection sooner he could have had the 'old style' treatment. Besides this his treatment was adequate. He didn't suffer many side effects as he was already extremely fatigued. On one occasion my husband felt he should give his dentist a letter from a specialist explaining that he had hepatitis C as he sensed his dentist didn't seem too happy about having him in the surgery. After this he didn't have any further issues and his condition didn't have any impact on any other treatment.
6. Before my husband was diagnosed with hepatitis C he didn't have much of a social life as he was exhausted and couldn't go anywhere. Once he had treatment things went back to normal, until recently when we discovered his liver cancer. His appetite is so poor now that I can only buy him food that will appeal to him. The entire family is upset but it has made us all bond closer together. It has affected my appetite and I have to do more physically. I have to plan my days ahead as I don't like to leave him alone for long.
7. I haven't suffered from any stigma associated with my husband's illness. Most people that we know are quite understanding.
8. All of the family have been told of my husband's terminal diagnosis and everyone is upset. Before my husband went into hospital on the 14th August we were about to go to Cyprus on holiday on the 18th August but we had to cancel.
9. My husband has not experienced any educational effects as a result of his illness. I haven't suffered any work related effects as I had already retired and there were no financial affects either.

6. Treatment/Care Support

1. My husband hasn't faced any difficulty in accessing treatment, care or support. My husband and I have never been offered any counselling, and I think that maybe we should have been offered it but at the time I don't think I would have accepted it.

7. Financial Assistance

1. My husband hasn't received any financial assistance from any of the Trusts or Funds. He tried applying for PIP but he was rejected as he didn't score high enough on their system. I told him that he should reapply as I have been told it is common knowledge they turn you down the first time you apply but he decided not to. He is only aware of the Skipton Fund as it popped up when I was looking on the internet but he has yet to submit the form.

8. Other Issues

1. I haven't taken part in any previous litigation concerning the use of infected blood products. I don't believe I have any other documents which may be relevant to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..

GRO-C

Dated.. 13/10/2019.....