

Witness Name: Edward William Conway

Statement No. WITN4482001

Dated: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF EDWARD WILLIAM CONWAY

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Edward William Conway will say as follows:-

#### 1. Introduction

1. My name is Edward William Conway, my date of birth is GRO-C 1988 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am currently working as a store worker. My parents are divorced, I have one elder sister and I live at home with my mother.

#### 2. How Infected

1. My father, Edward Francis Conway, born on the GRO-C 1958 is a haemophiliac although I am unsure as to what type of haemophilia he has. My father has also made a statement to the Inquiry in relation to becoming infected by contaminated blood.

2. My father became infected with hepatitis C as a consequence of receiving infected blood products in the 1980's. His brother, Seamus was also a haemophiliac and he too became infected with hepatitis C through infected blood products. Unfortunately, Seamus has since passed away.
3. As a young child, I had a close relationship with my father, but this deteriorated through adolescence and on into adulthood. We kept in touch over the years, but we are not as close as we once were.
4. In the 1980's my father was treated with Factor VIII for his haemophilia. I recall him self-administering this treatment at home. My father was treated for his haemophilia predominantly at the Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry, but also received treatment at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. I am unable to recall the names of the Consultants who treated him at these hospitals.
5. I am unable to comment on what, if any, information was given to my father about the risk of being exposed to infection but believe this will have been explained in my father's witness statement to the Inquiry.
6. My father became aware that he had been infected with hepatitis C in the early 1980s. I can't be more specific than that, as I was very young at the time. I believe he was informed of his infection by his Haematology Consultant at Altnagelvin Hospital when he, and a group of other patients who had all been asked to attend on the same day, were called into a room and told together that they had all become infected with hepatitis C through infected blood or blood products.
7. I am unable to comment on what information, was provided to my father, whether it was adequate and whether any information was given to him about infecting others. I believe my father would have covered these points in his statement to the Inquiry.

### 3. Other Infections

1. As well as his hepatitis C infection, my father also suffered with liver cancer and cirrhosis of the liver. I believe that through the treatment with Epclusa, the cancer has cleared, but he still has cirrhosis of the liver.
2. He has a short-term memory problem which causes him great difficulty. I believe that the hepatitis C infection has had a detrimental effect on his brain over the years. He also suffers with painful joints and debilitating arthritis.

### 4. Consent

1. I do not have any information on consent. My father will provide any relevant information on this section in his statement to the Inquiry.

### 5. Impact

1. The hepatitis C infection diagnosis impacted on my father quite significantly. He suffered with severe depression and spent a great deal of time in bed. He wasn't interested in anyone or anything. He just did not have the energy or the inclination to get up out of bed. He was also drinking quite heavily because of his depression. He constantly suffered with stomach problems and sickness. Also, his skin was very red in colour. To this day, he still suffers with constant joint pain and debilitating arthritis.
2. After the death of his brother Seamus (or Sea as we used to call him) through liver cancer in the 1980s, my father's sister, Tina, encouraged my father to go to the hospital for tests. It was found that he had pre-cancerous cells and received a diagnosis of sclerosis of the liver.

3. I believe that the medical staff at the hospital should have diagnosed my father's hepatitis C infection much earlier. I believe he should have been closely monitored and been placed on an effective treatment program. Instead, he was just left to 'get on with it'. He was not provided with or advised of any of the treatments available.
4. When my father was told that he was infected with hepatitis C in the early 1980s to my knowledge, he was not offered any treatment for this. I do not recall my father taking any medication for hepatitis C until approximately two years ago, but I don't know the name of the treatment he is on at the present time.
5. My father always had to go to Altnagelvin Hospital for any dental treatment he required.
6. My father's illness had a huge impact on my parents. Over the years they had many rows and arguments. My father could not work because of his health problems and this caused a financial strain on the family. My parents split up and got back together a few times, but it did not last. They eventually divorced in about 2000 when I was 11 years old.
7. I remember my father having no interest in playing with me or my sister as we were growing up. He would just lie in bed all day, go to the local bar for a drink or watch TV. He had no interest in spending time with us and probably did not have the energy. I cannot remember us ever going on a holiday as my friends did with their families. I feel we missed out on a lot of enjoyment with him and as a family. My mother essentially brought us up as a 'single parent'. It was an emotional strain on my mother and my sister, who was slightly older than me and more aware of what was going on.

8. I cannot recall any experience of the stigma associated with hepatitis C.

9. As far as I am aware, I don't think my father's illness affected mine or my sister's education. We just got on with it and considered the situation to be normal life as far as we were concerned because we were young at the time.

6. **Treatment/Care/Support**

1. I don't believe any treatment or support was offered to my father after he received his diagnosis. I want to know why they did not monitor him and place him on a treatment program. Why was he just left to get on with things without any support?

2. No counselling has ever been offered to my father or to the other members of the family and we have not been contacted in this regard.

7. **Financial Assistance**

1. I do not have any information to add to this section but believe my father would have provided an explanation in his statement to the Inquiry.

8. **Other Issues**

1. I would like to know why my father was abandoned by the doctors. Why was he left to just get on with things alone?<sup>?</sup> Why wasn't he provided with the care and support that he needed after his diagnosis of hepatitis C?<sup>?</sup>

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

**GRO-C**

Dated.....

4/3/2020