

Witness Name: RICHARD HOWELLS

Statement No: WITN5272001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: January 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RICHARD HOWELLS

I, RICHARD HOWELLS, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Richard Howells. I was born on **GRO-C** 1973 and I live at **GRO-C**
GRO-C I am married, have one son
and I work in a Chemical Refinery as a Team Leader.
2. My grandfather, Arthur Jones (born on **GRO-C** 1921), was infected with the
Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) from contaminated blood products. He died from liver
failure on 28th December 1998, aged 77.
3. My mother, Margaret Howells, and sister, Rhian Thomas, have also provided
Witness Statements to the Inquiry (Witness Numbers WITN1296001 and
WITN3267001 respectively).

4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my grandfather's full medical records. I understand that my grandfather's records were destroyed despite my mother's request to the Medical Records Department to preserve them. The limited documents we have in our possession to include grandfather's UKHCDO record have been exhibited to my sister's Statement.

Section 2. How Affected

5. My grandfather had mild Haemophilia A, with a clotting factor of 19%.
6. My grandfather was treated at the Swansea Haemophilia Centre at the Morriston and Singleton Hospitals under the care of Dr Khurshid initially and then Dr GRO-D GRO-D and Dr A Beddall.
7. My grandfather rarely needed Factor VIII (FVIII) treatment. To my knowledge grandfather was only ever treated with it on two occasions, in the mid to late 1980s, when he was admitted to hospital with Haematemesis and, later, when he needed teeth extracting. Having spoken to my family members, I understand that Grandfather was also treated with FVIII concentrate in the 1970s.
8. We are a close family, and we live in close proximity to one another (many of us are neighbours). No advice was given to my grandfather about the risk of infection to him through blood treatment products. A member of my family would have always accompanied Grandfather to his appointments.
9. My grandfather had noticed for a time that his belly was becoming swollen. He had visited his GP who had referred him for further investigation. Grandfather had no idea that he had HCV until he was admitted to hospital in 1997 for ascites

and was told that he had HCV and advanced cirrhosis of the liver. Dr Kingham, Consultant Gastroenterologist, told Grandfather when he was alone and in a very matter of fact way that he had Hepatitis C, there was no cure and there was nothing they could do for him. Grandfather rang my mother from the hospital to tell her. He was crying, something none of us had ever experienced him doing before. The way my grandfather was told was unacceptable, on his own, and without any explanation of the infection or a way forward for him.

10. My sister has exhibited a document (dated 18th January 2000) to her Statement suggesting Grandfather 'was known to be positive for Hepatitis C' when the liver cirrhosis diagnosis was reached in 1997. He had no idea of this. It also states that Grandfather had abnormal liver enzyme readings as far back as 1985 and, again in, 1986. Strange comments were made by the medical staff about alcohol whilst Grandfather was in hospital after a suspected heart attack in or around 1991. My mother asked the sister on the ward what was wrong, and she said "he is going to have to stop drinking". My grandfather never touched alcohol. We thought then that she must be talking about someone else and that she had confused Grandfather with that person.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I do not believe my grandfather received any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

12. My grandfather was tested for infection without his knowledge and consent. Grandfather's UKHCDO document states that he tested HIV negative in 1987. He was not aware of it. He was not aware of any testing.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. My grandfather was a strong independent man. After falling ill with HCV and cirrhosis of the liver, his health deteriorated rapidly, and he went from a man who did everything asked of him by the family to someone who needed help to do everything. My mother and father did everything for him. His fluid intake was reduced to just a few small glasses of water a day. He stuck to this religiously. I can remember him constantly having a painfully dry mouth, all of the time. He was not told there was a spray available to relieve the dry mouth until just before he died. His voice became quiet and weak as a result of this. He also developed a hernia as a result of the lack of fluids.
14. When Grandfather had a hospital/dentist appointment he was made to feel like a leper. The clinicians donned gloves and masks and it made him feel awful. His weight plummeted and he had to be pushed in a wheelchair.
15. On Christmas day morning 1998, my mother went over to my grandparents' house. My grandfather was sleeping in a bed in the living room at his point. When my mother got there, my grandfather said to her "sorry, I think I've had a bit of an accident". She said "don't worry we'll get you sorted". She pulled back the bed clothes to see a mass of jelly like blood. My grandfather had haemorrhaged internally, and it had passed through him. A terrible sight for my mother. An ambulance was called, and he was taken to hospital.
16. Grandfather died on the night of the 28th December 1998. We could not bring his coffin home to his house.

17. My grandmother was agoraphobic and had a social phobia. She relied on my grandfather completely. He did all the shopping and took care of all running of the household. When he got ill, all this changed. He went from being the 'go to' man in my family to needing to be taken care of himself.
18. My grandfather was the first person close to me who I knew that had died. It was shocking and incredible upsetting. I had never experienced anything like it. I have lost many people close to me since then including my own father and a partner. His death remains the most shocking to me, at the time I was devastated. I spent a huge amount of time with my grandfather when I was growing up. He lived next door but one to us. He had retired when I was about 3 years old, so he and my grandmother were always there for me when I was growing up. Both my parents worked. He took me on walks and swimming in local rivers (places I now take my son). Also, he was someone who could turn his hand to anything. I learned lots off him and I myself have done much renovating and building work using skills I learned from my grandfather.
19. At the time there was a lot stigma and ignorance around HIV and HCV, and it was something you felt you needed to 'stay quiet' about.
20. My mother was very close to her father all of her life and always lived very close to her parents. My father lost his father when he was a young child, so he also looked on my grandfather as a father figure and was also extremely close to him. He was devastating for us as a family, especially when the circumstances of his infection became clearer.
21. I have two GRO-C who also have haemophilia, one of whom has been confirmed as having HCV. He was also not told he had it, but it was on his records.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

22. None of us, including my grandfather and **GRO-C** were offered counselling and support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

23. My grandfather received no financial assistance. I understand he wrote to the Haemophilia Society seeking financial assistance but received none.

24. My mother has received Stage 1 and Stage 2 payments through the Skipton Fund and then the Welsh scheme (WIBSS).

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

25. I am not seeking anonymity and I understand that this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....
GRO-C
Date.....*3/2/2021*.....