

Witness Name: IRENE BRIERLEY

Statement No: WITN5520001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: FEBRUARY 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF IRENE BRIERLEY

I, Irene Brierley, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Irene Brierley. I was born on GRO-C 1944 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C
2. My husband, Brian Brierley, was infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from contaminated blood products. He died from pneumonia on 22nd February 1991 aged 49.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Brian's full medical records.
4. My son, Sean Brierley, has also provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry (WITN1104001).

Section 2. How Affected

5. Brian was born on **GRO-C** 1941 in **GRO-C** Lancashire. He was one of two brothers diagnosed with Haemophilia B (otherwise known as Christmas disease). Brian and his older brother, Alan, spent a lot of their childhood in hospital. They were treated with bed rest, cold compresses and whole blood transfusions.
6. I met Brian in 1962 and we married in 1964, I was 20 and Brian was 23 years old. We both grew up on council estates where manual professions were the norm. Brian did a Pharmacy Degree at Sunderland College and was given his blood transfusions at the Newcastle Royal Infirmary. He knew he wouldn't be suited to manual work because of his haemophilia. He worked very hard to earn his Degree and working as a Pharmacist. After Brian qualified, we moved 10 miles from Liverpool where he managed a pharmacy shop in the city centre for 4 to 5 years. Brian's care transferred to the Haemophilia Centre at the Royal Liverpool Infirmary around the corner from the shop.
7. After the owner of the pharmacy shop decided to sell it, we raised the money and bought it.
8. Brian was first treated with Factor IX (FIX) concentrate some time during the mid to late 1970s. Brian had severe haemophilia, so most of his bleeds tended to be in the joints (in his knees and his ankles). Once they started, they just wouldn't stop. His joints would just balloon up and he would have to go to hospital for transfusions and for them to try to drain them. We were so impressed with the new FIX treatment. It was the best thing ever. We kept it in the fridge and Brian could treat himself at home. No-one warned us about the risk of infection. The doctors said it would great for Brian and we were both so excited about the freedom it would give us.
9. Brian later began to worry about the FIX concentrate through articles he was reading in the Royal Pharmaceutical Journal and elsewhere. He was assured

by the Haemophilia Society and the clinicians at the Haemophilia Centre that it was safe. Brian asked several times if the FIX treatment was heat treated and was told that it was. In early 1985, he was specifically told by the nurse, under instruction from Dr McVerry, the Consultant Haematologist, that Factor IX unlike Factor VIII was from the UK, not the USA, and had been heat-treated and was, therefore, safe to inject without fear of infection. He subsequently went back to the Liverpool Royal Infirmary and asked for an HIV test. He had the test and we received a letter in the post in the Summer of 1985 stating that he was HIV positive. I remember the letter. Brian read it and passed it to me. It was a short letter of no more than two or three sentences.

10. Brian should have been told in person and we weren't given any information to help us to understand and/or manage the infection. Up until then, Brian had no other health problems than haemophilia and was always seen at the hospital, it being so close to the shop. He had rarely seen the GP we had registered with since the move to Liverpool. We were both left devastated by the news of the HIV diagnosis and we had no-one to talk to and to talk it through with. I said to Brian 'ring the GP' and the GP could not have been nicer or more helpful. He invited Brian to come over to the house for a drink and a chat and they talked it through together.
11. Brian had a real thirst for knowledge and tried so hard to learn as much as he could about all sorts of subjects. He did so much research to reassure himself on how to keep us, his family, and others protected from HIV. There was a lot of false information out there through the press. He knew that we were not at risk from drinking from the same cup for example. Our own research meant that we were free from any misunderstandings.
12. Brian was well respected in the community and he had a deep social conscience. He hated any kind of injustice and he was angry, not only for himself but for others infected including the children infected with HIV. He had been assured that the FIX treatment was heat-treated when it clearly

wasn't. He saw it as unfair and could get very heated on the subject. He saw a solicitor and was party to the HIV litigation that ended in 1991.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. I do not believe Brian to have had any infection other than HIV. I was tested for HIV after Brian's death and thankfully received a negative test result. It was a horrible experience for me and my two sons, Sean and Steven.

Section 4. Consent

14. I have no reason to believe that Brian was treated or tested without his knowledge and consent.

15. Brian was one of several at the forefront of trialing new treatment drugs (AZT) for HIV. We were so worried, and our only hope was that the drugs would help. Brian wanted to take part in the trial in the hope of helping others too.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

16. The fear and stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS was terrible. The news of it was all over TV and it was thought of as the gay disease and the disease for druggies. We had to keep it a secret and couldn't tell anyone. Who would come into Brian's pharmacy if they knew he had HIV? It was an awful position for us to be in. I was scared. Every time Brian was unwell, I worried he was about to die and about people finding out. We were so worried about our boys, one at university and the other about to do his A levels. I worried if they would lose a parent (and possibly two if I was infected too). Brian's ongoing research helped, and Brian and I managed to keep it a secret just between ourselves.

17. Brian never complained. He made himself as normal as he could, so as to not draw attention to himself, although he was often in agony with his joints. He worked hard and organised himself so that all his pill containers at work were around him. I occasionally helped out in the shop from time to time but after we knew Brian was infected with HIV, I took a job working nights at a residential home for teenage girls. We had no savings whatsoever. We had borrowed (from friends, family and the bank) the money to buy the shop and we were still repaying it. Being a Pharmacist was the right job for Brian and he was loved by all his customers. Brian had a lot of opportunistic infections and when Brian got too sick to work, we had to hire locums and they cost an arm and a leg. They didn't care about it as much as Brian. The shop had to be sold after Brian's death although I kept it going with locums for as long as I could. It didn't get what it should have been worth, and a lot of money (from the MacFarlane Trust payment) had to be spent on the building to make it sale worthy. If Brian could, he would have left it as a thriving business.

18. At the age of 49, Brian looked like a man in his eighties. Brian became really unwell in the Winter of 1990 and was admitted to hospital with pneumonia in January 1991. He was very ill, on a nebulizer. Steven was studying in France and Sean was in London working there and I realised that I would have to bring them back home. I remember Brian really rallying at seeing Sean when I brought him into the hospital, so much so, that Sean decided some days later that it was alright for him to return to London. I was at work when I took the call telling me that Brian had had a turn for the worse. His heart failed and he died 22nd February 1991.

19. Brian was very popular. The crematorium at Brian's funeral was packed out. Some of our friends must have suspected that Brian had HIV/AIDS. They must have worked it out but none of them ever broached us. Brian was much loved, and his death left a hole in a lot of people's lives. Our two sons were deeply affected. They had such a lovely relationship with their father, and I see so much of Brian in the two of them. They each have three children now

and it hurts that Brian never met them. It is just over 30 years since I lost Brian and it still feels raw.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

20. No counselling or psychological support was offered to us after Brian was informed of his HIV diagnosis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

21. I received a payment of approximately £13,000 after Brian's death in 1991, which may have been sent via the McFarlane Trust (MFT). I do not have any correspondence from either the MFT or Brian's solicitor as, at that time, the public's attitude to HIV was such that any mail with reference to haemophilia or the MFT that came to the house would be destroyed by me and I did not want the boys to see it either. I later received £60,000 but again do not have any correspondence regarding this.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

22. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand 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

Dated.....

3rd March 2021