

Witness Name: Ruth Elisabeth Jenkins

Statement No. WITN2492001

Dated: 26th February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RUTH ELISABETH JENKINS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Ruth Elisabeth Jenkins will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Ruth Elisabeth Jenkins. My date of birth is GRO-C GRO-C 1947 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired Teacher and a mother of three children.
2. I make this statement on behalf of my brother, Christopher John Thomas who was a mild to moderate haemophiliac. I will mention how he became infected with HIV as a result of receiving blood products, and how this impacted on my own life.

2. How infected

1. On 19th September 1990, my brother Christopher John Thomas lost his battle with AIDS, aged 46, leaving a wife and two children.
2. I believe he was given blood products for his haemophilia from February 1981 until he died in September 1990.
3. I believe Christopher had read about the threat of contaminated blood and was advised by Dr. Korn (Consultant Haematologist at Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor to have a HIV test in February 1984. Christopher was told approximately 2 weeks later by Dr. Korn personally in his office that he was HIV positive.
4. My brother died because of the failure of the Government and the medical authorities within the National Health Service (NHS) to recognise, admit and act upon the knowledge that there was a major problem regarding Factor VIII blood transfusions in the 1970/1980s.
5. At that time, society was naïve and ignorant of the facts of HIV, AIDS and Hepatitis C. It was a devastating time for all the family and I personally lost a much loved brother and uncle to my three children.
6. Information was limited around the 1980's, we did not have Google search or mobile phones. We found ourselves very isolated at times.
7. My focus at that time was to support and care for my brother Christopher and his family.

8. As a family, we were faced with the enormity of the situation and as Christopher's younger sister I was devastated to be told that he had contracted HIV through contaminated blood. Haemophilia had been part and parcel of my childhood, and we had formed a close relationship. We had already been through the trauma in 1966 of Christopher having to have his leg amputated, due to a serious pathological fracture of his femur.

3. Other Infections

1. My sister in law, Judith Thomas will cover on this section in her witness statement.

4. Consent

1. This section will also be covered by my sister in law's witness statement.

5. Impact

1. We had formed a close relationship as a family during this difficult time. Faced with the enormity of the situation, we were "silenced" to begin with, while searching for the answers to so many questions. It was a different era then, information was not so readily available.
2. The initial impact of the situation was disbelief and bewilderment. We were "lucky" we had a strong family network, but many tears were shed in private.
3. I was very involved in the final nursing of Christopher's life in hospital and at home. This was a very difficult period and

experience for us all. It was so hard to see my parents watch him fade away. We did our best and worked together with dignity.

4. My brother died in September 1990 and unfortunately, my husband left the family home in November 1990. On the balance of probabilities, both contributed to a period of anxiety and medication.
5. Ironically, I was eventually referred to Dr. Devakumar, Consultant Psychiatrist in Bangor in about 1994/95 the very same consultant who had supported Christopher through his ordeal. This resulted in three months recovery from (as my family called it) a "collapse".
6. The fact that my brother had had his life cut short in such a cruel and unnecessary way has had a huge impact on my personal life. I still miss him greatly.
7. My reaction to the opening of the Inquiry took me completely by surprise. I found myself overcome with a huge repressed grief, which lasted for a few days.
8. I am relieved that my parents are not alive today to witness the evidence that is unfolding as we approach this Inquiry. To lose their only son was devastating enough.
9. We all put our full trust in to the health and medical authorities, to provide appropriate and safe treatment for Christopher at all times and for all other patients.
10. "Pass the buck" comes to mind today as I read evidence of what really occurred. At the end of the day, someone somewhere chose not to listen or act on information given and available.

11. I would like to think that the Inquiry will allow the truth to unfold, and that families will be heard in a dignified manner.

12. Christopher's final months were as dignified as we could possibly make them. It has to be said, that our immediate medical team provided wonderful care, but then it was too late.

9. **Other Issues**

1. I hope that the Inquiry will discover the truth and offer us all a final closure. You cannot change history, but you can try to educate others, so that the same mistakes will never be repeated.

2. All the families who have been affected over the years need to hear the truth and receive answers to all the questions submitted by the solicitors representing us all.

3. I hope this will be the case, and that all those who have had their lives cut short in such a cruel, unnecessary way, will be remembered with the love and respect they deserve. Hopefully lessons will be learnt, so there will never be a repeat disaster.

4. We can only hope this Inquiry will provide comfort to those who have waited for decades for the truth to be revealed. I also hope that society as a whole will have a better understanding of why this inquiry is so important.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-C

Dated... 26:02:2019.....