

Witness Name: Judith Elizabeth Sullivan

Statement No: WITN1782001

Exhibits: WITN1782002 – WITN1782003

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JUDITH ELIZABETH SULLIVAN

I, Judith Elizabeth Sullivan will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Judith Elizabeth Sullivan and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C. I was born on GRO-C 1959. I am a widow, and have a son called Benjamin Robert John Sullivan with my late husband Anthony Sullivan. I live with my current partner and have been with him for 30 years. I work two days a week as an office and accounts manager at an MOT garage.
2. I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late husband's medical records, however, I have written to the hospital to try to obtain these.

Section 2. How Affected

4. I am giving a statement in relation to my late husband, Anthony John Sullivan, who was known as 'Sully', who passed away on 19 May 1988 aged 40 at the Queen Elizabeth (QE) Hospital in Edgbaston, Birmingham. We met when I was about 17 or 18 years old. After living in the Black Forest in Germany for about three years we returned home and got married on [GRO-C] 1983. He started to work for a bill board company and we bought our own house as we managed to get a mortgage. Our son Ben was born on [GRO-C] 1984 and Sully was very proud.
5. I remember in or around early 1985 when Sully was driving me and our four month old son to meet a work colleague he had an epileptic fit. We got him to the QE Hospital where a surgeon, Mr Williams, diagnosed him with temporal lobe epilepsy and said he would operate on Sully to remove the Glioblastoma. This operation was eventually carried out sometime between May and August 1985 at Smethwick Neurology Hospital, which was part of the QE Hospital.
6. The surgeon took away as much of the tumour but he said that the tumour was likely to come back as they only removed as much as they could. The operation affected Sully very badly as it changed his personality, but we coped as we loved each other so much. He also had a horrendous scar from ear to ear.
7. At some point in or around 1986, we went to the Midland Nerve Hospital in Birmingham. I presume that he was still with Mr Williams but I do not know why he was called to this hospital. I remember them saying that Sully had contracted Hepatitis B. I did not understand the implications, as I had never heard of the virus and no proper information was given to us. I only thought it was a little more serious when we were told to keep everything of Sully's separate and be careful with the baby.

8. My son and I were vaccinated with a Hepatitis B vaccine and Sully was injected with something by a nurse to prevent him from bleeding. I am unsure of the name of the product but just remember them mentioning 'Factor' with an 'X'. I only remember him having one injection in my presence but he was admitted into hospital for some time, so he may have had other injections.
9. We were then sent home and told to keep Sully's cutlery separate and to mark all of his cutlery with a cross so we could not use it by mistake as his illness could be transmitted by saliva or blood products. We were also told not to share towels. Sully was treated like a leaper and told not to be too close to our infant son. I do not remember being given any other advice and so I do not feel we were given adequate information regarding Hepatitis B.
10. I do not know when he became infected; but I believe that my husband contracted Hepatitis B from a blood transfusion either during or after his surgery for the Glioblastoma removal. They must have given Sully a blood test before his operation and so they would have seen if he had any infection then. It must have been during the operation that he became infected and that is why they called him back to Midland Nerve Hospital afterwards. I went to all his appointments as he could not drive due to his fits.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. My late husband suffered from no other infections that I am aware of.

Section 4. Consent

12. I cannot remember Sully or myself ever being told about, or giving our consent to any testing or treatment.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. After the brain tumour treatment Sully started to recover normally. Psychologically, however, the operation had a massive impact on Sully. His whole persona changed and it felt as if his personality had been taken away. His confidence was very low. Friends used to come round and try and take him out because he lost contact with the outside world really. He became very quiet and I think having to keep his things separate was very difficult for him mentally. He spent some time in the garden and he was slowly getting better before he began to suffer from jaundice-like symptoms such as yellow eyes. He was always tired and in bed and it seemed as though he had just given up, which naturally made me stressed.
14. The physical effects of Hepatitis B were massive. Soon after being told of his infection, his health began to deteriorate and he developed ascites causing his stomach to swell up and this was very uncomfortable for him. He had to go into Midland Nerve Hospital initially and was an inpatient for about a month. Over the period of months that he had ascites, he regularly went back to drain the fluid to alleviate the pain. He felt ill and had a general malaise. The Hepatitis B was making life very difficult and the swelling got worse.
15. The mental impact of Hepatitis B on Sully was devastating. Moving on with life after such a major operation was hard enough, but then to find out, mid-recovery, that he had been infected with a life threatening virus was truly horrible and was totally unexpected. After getting on with his life after the operation on his brain, he then had a further fight for his life with the virus. Going to the hospital to get the ascites drained was mentally tough on Sully. He felt isolated and he suffered from depression because of it and the operation.
16. During one episode, Sully was at home and we called an ambulance as he felt very unwell. He went into QE Hospital and died there that morning from an

oesophageal haemorrhage, which was presumed to be caused by his Hepatitis B. I attach a copy of his death certificate at Exhibit WITN1782002. His body was cleaned up and put into a body bag and we were told that we could not touch him. He was then cremated.

17. I do not remember any treatment for the Hepatitis B as such; only having the ascites drained which was so uncomfortable for him. I do not know if there was any treatment we were missing out on as we were given no help and were not told of any.

18. I do not know how to begin to describe how losing my husband at such a young age. I was only 29 at the time and a young mother. I was only about four and a half years into our marriage with a young son. Not only enduring the invasive Glioblastoma surgery but then contracting Hepatitis B during his treatment, which was his killer, had a monstrous effect on us both.

19. All of this affected our relationship heavily, and there was no intimacy or sexual intercourse. I became a carer and not a wife for about three years after his operation until he died. The stress was so high. I even had to seek counselling through my GP as I found life so hard. I was always caring for him and I could not live the normal life that I wanted. My parents were my main support in this time, financially, mentally and physically. Without them I would have had a breakdown.

20. I developed Addison's disease from stress about seven years after Sully passed away. I always hid my emotions as much as I could and I think all this just built up. I have to take steroids everyday for the rest of my life as I will have this illness for the rest of my life.

21. Our baby was brought up without knowing his dad as Sully was always too ill to be with his son. The relationship with his father was so short. I think this affected our son greatly and even now he is always stressed and I think that

developed from me. Our son spent most of his young life with either my parents or my sister due to Sully's condition as my family cared for Ben while I was visiting Sully in hospital or outpatients; this therefore impacted the lives of my family. My sister actually cared for Sully for a week, which happened to be the week before he died, while I went to Devon with my son and parents to get a short break.

22. The stigma was huge with Sully's Hepatitis B diagnosis, unbeknown to me at the time. We both lost a lot of friends as people found it difficult to cope with illnesses and so some people chose to stay away who worried they may contract Hepatitis B. Not much was known about the virus at this time. I was open in telling people as I did not realise the stigma and impact behind people knowing of the infection. People would ask if Sully was homosexual as it was assumed that was how the virus was contracted.

23. There was also further impact on us financially as Sully was unable to work and he had to leave his job in the bill board company; primarily due to his operation, but also due to his general ill health as a result of Hepatitis B, and so we struggled. Money was always short and so we were always assisted by my parents. My husband had no savings so we totally relied on social security payments. I do not know how we survived financially. After Sully died I had to take up a Saturday job just to make ends meet.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

24. No counselling or support was offered to either me or my late husband. There were no support groups that we knew about or were directed to and no careers to help look after him.

25. I do not remember any psychological support or counselling being offered to Sully while he was at the Midland Nerve Centre. While caring for Sully I found

this so stressful that I had eventually to seek counselling. My GP organised a counsellor, whom I found was totally inadequate, as they had no life experience.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

26. Neither I nor my late husband received any financial support. We did not even know there were any trusts and had never heard of any.

Section 8. Other Issues

27. I feel as if something has been omitted or covered up at some point along the way. I never had any conversation with the hospital or anyone after Sully's death and the way they dealt with his body after his death seemed strange. I want to know why Sully was not treated for Hepatitis B and / or why the treatment did not work.

28. I have a timeline of about eight pictures detailing, visually, the deterioration in Sully's health which I attach at Exhibit WITN1782003.

Anonymity

29. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

30. I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed...

GRO-C

Dated...

13.3.2019