

Witness Name: John Michael Walker

Statement No: WITN1789001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 6 June 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN MICHAEL WALKER

I, John Michael Walker, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is John Michael Walker and I was born on [GRO-C] 1955. I live at [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Derbyshire [GRO-C] and I have been married to Rezaleofe for 11 years. I have three children from my previous marriage and have just returned from Spain where I had a bar which I ran with my wife. I am now seeking work here.
2. I make this statement in relation to my son, Steven David Walker (Steven) who was born on [GRO-C] 1980 and who sadly passed away on [GRO-C] 2017, aged only 37, as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Steven's full medical records.

4. I am aware that my former wife, Gwynneth Elaine Walker (Gwynn), also intends to provide a statement to the Inquiry which will be more detailed than my own.

Section 2. How Affected

5. Steven had severe Haemophilia A. He was diagnosed after I had been accused by Social Services of abusing Steven as he had bruises all over his bottom. Our childminder saw this and contacted Social Services.
6. Following the diagnosis Steven received Factor VIII blood products from about 1983.
7. I recall an incident when Steven fell from a swing which caused him to bleed externally. That is the first time I recall him having an external bleed. Steven was treated at Bristol Hospital, however they did not know what to do and put him on a drip before injecting him with Factor VIII.
8. Steven also received treatment at Hull Infirmary, Chesterfield Hospital, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital (in his formative years) and I believe this is where he was infected when he was 5 years old.
9. Gwynn and I were never given any information or advice about any risk of Steven being exposed to infection from blood products.
10. As a result of receiving Factor VIII Steven was infected with HIV and Hepatitis but I am not sure which one or whether it was both.
11. When I found out that Steven had been infected with HIV, Gwynn and I were already separated. However we met and she told me what had happened; it was a massive shock to us both. This was in about 1985/86. I was serving in the RAF in Norfolk at the time until I was posted in 1987 though I was living very close to

her for that initial period of separation which made things a little easier to deal with between us.

12. I recall there were a number of leaflets available which provided information about the infection but there was a lot of scare stories around at the time concerning HIV.

13. I felt we had adequate information; we knew how it was transmitted and what precautions we had to take.

14. Gwynn's statement will deal in detail with a lot more detail than mine as she was with Steven more than I was at the time though Steven often came to stay with me.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I do not know if Steven had any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

16. I do not know if Steven was ever tested or treated without parental consent or knowledge. As I was separated from Gwynn at the time she was taking Steven to his Haemophilia appointments even though we shared custody of our children. She told me the highlights but spared me the detail.

17. I know they were always taking blood samples from him but assumed it related to Steven's Haemophilia.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

18. Steven was 5 years old when he was infected so it is impossible to understand the mental impact on him at that age. It was really when he reached puberty and the time when woman became relevant to him that the impact really came home to him as to how bad his situation was.
19. So many different things that Steven wanted to do were taken out of his hands, he had a miserable life. He had the grief and pain of Haemophilia as well as HIV which changed his life.
20. Steven received treatment for HIV and Hepatitis. I am not sure what he received but I know he was taking so many tablets to keep his T-count up and that they probably kept him alive a little longer. Steven had a death sentence and the medication did not change anything. We did not expect him to see his 21st birthday but he died when he was 37 years old. To my mind it was a blessing that he died, he was isolated, and a sad and lonely man, it was heart-breaking. He died just before he was about to move back in to live with his mother which would have helped him.
21. As a result of HIV, Steven's immune system was very weak and Hepatitis caused him to have a lot of infections; he was always ill. Also Haemophilia caused him to have terrible arthritis which in turn caused him significant pain. It is impossible to know where one condition started and another stopped. There were too many side effects to pinpoint them.
22. Steven did not have much of a social life. When he was younger it was very difficult, he did not have friends to stay over but it became the norm for us which impacted on our other children as well.

23. When he was older, the impact became bigger. Steven was a social lad, he was bright and had a sense of humour that not everyone understood. He enjoyed science fiction and was a huge Star Trek fan to the extent that he attended a convention. He never got the chance to interact, however he did have a girlfriend for a short time who did know about his infections, she was the only one he had. He did not have a life at all.

24. He did not want to live at home with his parents, he was strongly independent. However Gwynn and I had to intervene at one point when Steven had a period of drug abuse. It was desperation on his part to fit in, and we stepped in to get him cleaned up. Also his generosity was probably being exploited by people as he would just buy drinks for anyone in the pub and they would happily just take them off him. He wanted friends and company.

25. My wife is Filipino and we invited Steven to travel to the Philippines with us to see where she comes from. He was delighted to join us and loved his time away. He had not been on holiday for a long time, he wanted to go on holiday but just had no one to go with.

26. Steven also learnt to drive an automatic but he had such an old car he never bought much and he never went out much, he was keen on computers but that was all.

27. No parent should outlive their children. It is so sad that his life was taken away from him and I know how many things he wanted to do but never got the chance.

28. The impact of Steven's infection on our family was massive but it is so hard to quantify it as we have never known anything else.

29. The stigma associated with HIV and Hepatitis at the time was very bad and it would probably not have been good to be too open with the news. As a result we

only ever told our family about Steven's infections including grandparents as well as Steven's brother and sister. I do not believe that anyone treated Steven any differently after knowing of his infections.

30. We never advertised or told anyone that Steven had HIV and Hepatitis and I believe he only started telling people when he was older. However we did tell the schools Steven attended. We did not advertise Steven's infection as we felt this would cause more problems.

31. Steven went to school but was very isolated as he did not go outside to play sport with everyone else due to his condition. He was bullied and teased so we took him away from that school and put him into private school; this was the best thing for him. He opened up and he received the attention that he needed.

32. Gwynn and I got back together in 1991 (until 2007) and we have always moved to wherever my jobs would take me. Due to a job opportunity I received in 1995 we moved to GRO-C so Steven was home schooled by teachers. He did some exams, the key ones, maths, physics and the like.

33. Steven was planning to go to college but he tired very easily; which is also why he never worked. He just could not manage anything for too long, even though he was a bright lad, articulate and an avid reader, it was a passion for him.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

34. I am not aware of Steven facing any difficulties or obstacles in receiving treatment. All my experiences with the health service were good and positive.

35. Steven was offered counselling but he was very stubborn and never accepted it. Steven was very depressed towards the end of his life to do with his circumstances not his illness.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

John Michael Walker

Dated: 6th June June 2019