

Witness Name: David Leonard

Statement No.: WITN0656001

Exhibits: WITN0656002

Dated: 25 June 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MR DAVID LEONARD

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 28 January 2019.

I, DAVID LEONARD, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is David Thomas Leonard. My date of birth is GRO-C 1941 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a bachelor with no children. I am a retired Solicitor.

Section 2. How Affected

2. In this statement I intend to speak about my mother Kathleen Mary Leonard nee Williams and her infection with a form of the Hepatitis virus and an auto-immune disease which I believe was contracted from contaminated blood given to her during a blood transfusion which I believe caused her death. My mother was born on the GRO-C 1914 and died on the 1 April 1981 at the age of 66.

3. I will go on to describe in particular, the nature of her illness, how her illness affected me and my family, the treatment which my mother received and the impact it had on her and our lives together.
4. My mother was a very active woman during her life. She qualified as an English graduate as a young woman and was a wonderful teacher. My mother taught in many schools in East London and her last position before her death was in the role of a Deputy Headmistress in a primary school in Leytonstone. My mother loved her job.
5. My mother used to cycle every day to school and back whatever the weather. She was as fit as a fiddle. I was 39 years old when my mother died and in all of my years I did not know of her ever having a serious disease or operation. I cannot remember her ever visiting her GP. The only illness she had was varicose veins in her left leg and the odd cough. She was in very good health and was looking forward to spending her retirement with my father.
6. I believe my mother retired at the age of 65 and it was shortly after this that she became ill. A year or so before her death she had an operation at Whipps Cross University Hospital, Leytonstone, London, now part of the Barts Health NHS Trust. The operation was to remove a non-malignant polyp from her nose. She may have had the operation before she retired whilst she was still in employment. My mother was otherwise perfectly healthy at the time. The operation involved a blood transfusion. I am unable to explain the details of my mother's blood transfusion, the exact dates of her treatment or why she was given blood. She did not have haemophilia or any other bleeding disorder. As far as I was aware she had never been diagnosed with any blood disorder.

7. I am also unable to say whether any, and if so what, information or advice was provided to my mother or other members of the family beforehand about the risk of being infected. I do not know if my mother was given any advice about the risk of infection involved in receiving a blood transfusion. I can confirm that no information was ever provided to me.
8. It was not long after the operation, possibly a few months later, when my mother began to show symptoms of jaundice and loss of weight, which her medical advisers could not explain. My mother's health began to deteriorate. The doctors eventually made a diagnosis of hepatitis but there was no mention how or where it had been contracted from. The doctors could not ascertain the source of the infection. I cannot recall whether the doctors confirmed that she had contracted Hepatitis C or Hepatitis B. The type has not been recorded on her death certificate. I have provided a copy of my mother's death certificate to the Inquiry, which I refer to as Exhibit WITN0656002.
9. I cannot remember when my mother was told she had Hepatitis. I am unaware of what information was provided to my mother about her infection with Hepatitis and the adequacy of the information she might have received to enable her to manage and understand the infection. I cannot comment on how she was informed of the infection or what information my mother was given about the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection. They may have advised my mother on her condition however I am unaware of this.
10. Whipps Cross University Hospital is still part of Barts Group. I remember it had the most terrible reputation. I used to play rugby for a local club at that time and if you were injured you tried to avoid going to that hospital. It had that reputation for many years although today it is now getting better. The whole group was until recently in special measures.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. During my mother's stay in North Middlesex Hospital I learned that my mother had also contracted an auto-immune disease. Aids was not then in common parlance so it wasn't called Aids then. I had a friend who was a biochemist/endocrinologist who worked in the research side of Charing Cross Hospital. It was either the hospital doctors at North Middlesex Hospital or my friend at Charing Cross Hospital who alerted me as to the existence of this auto-immune disease and the possibility that my mother was exhibiting symptoms of the same. They talked about how the body 'turned in on itself' instead of the body fighting itself and it contributed to the disease. The doctors offered no explanation as to how my mother had caught this disease and there was definitely no mention of it being connected to her operation. My recollection of the facts is telescoped to a degree and it is difficult to remember everything.
12. I do not believe that my mother received any infection other than a form of hepatitis and an auto immune disease as a result of being given infected blood products nor do I believe that she was treated or tested without her knowledge or consent or for the purposes of research. I do not know if she was given adequate or full information.

Section 4. Consent

13. In terms of providing her consent I believe my mother would have followed the advice of the medical experts. I have no idea as to whether she was treated or tested without her consent. That said, my mother was a very intelligent lady and it is unlikely that she would have agreed to have received any treatment or testing without being given adequate information or allowed any treatment to be carried out without her consent.

Section 5. Impact

14. The deterioration in my mother's health in the early days started slowly. When my mother started to exhibit symptoms she initially went to the Jubilee Cottage Hospital in Woodford Green. She went there two or three times. This was a simple 20 minute walk from our home. I cannot remember how frequent the hospital visits were. My mother's skin started to turn yellow and she began to lose weight. Her activity levels slowed down until she ceased to be active. I would describe her condition as a wasting illness. Given the time which has now elapsed it is difficult for me to recollect the exact time frame but I would say the deterioration in her health happened over the course of about six months following her operation.
15. As my mother became weaker and weaker it was frustrating for her and for all of us knowing that something was wrong and being unable to establish the reason. My mother went to the Jubilee Cottage Hospital for a while and the doctors were trying to work out what was wrong with her. The eventual diagnosis was jaundice and hepatitis but the doctors just couldn't work out what the cause was.
16. My mother was later admitted to North Middlesex Hospital. She never left this hospital. I was still living at home then but I was abroad a lot on business however my sister was living at home permanently. My sister and I did not have any specific conversations about our mother but we were both in agreement that her health was deteriorating.
17. All the information we were given about our mother's condition came from these two hospitals. They could find no reason for her illness or her deterioration and they started to treat my mother for jaundice and Hepatitis. I don't believe the doctors at North Middlesex Hospital ever thought of going back to Whipps Cross University Hospital to ascertain if there was any link between her symptoms and her treatment there.

18. When my mother was diagnosed with Hepatitis, I cannot recollect any treatment she received but she was given some medication. I think they may have tried some kind of new medication but it didn't help or work as my mother continued to decline and lost weight. I do not recall my mother suffering any adverse reactions or her taking any particular pills or drugs.
19. The day my mother passed away my father rang me at work and told me that my mother had died. When I arrived at the hospital I was told that I should not touch my mother however when I was with her I kissed her on the forehead. We weren't allowed to stay very long.
20. Soon after she died my mother's body was taken away and sealed. My mother was immediately put in a coffin in special insulation and a lid was put down. Admittedly when I saw this I felt a bit worried about possible infection. My family are Welsh and we have a tradition that when a relative dies the coffin is taken home and left open until the funeral so that people can come and pay their respects. We wanted to do that at home with our mother but because of the hospital procedures we were prevented from doing so.
21. My mother's illness did not have an impact on my mother's work as she had already decided to retire and had left work before the disease was in full swing. My mother did not retire from her job due to the illness. However the illness affected the retirement plans she and my father had made for when they both had retired.
22. My father and mother had made plans for their retirement and the places they would go and the people they would see. My father was a maths teacher and they had both planned to retire at around the same time to embark on their plans for the future. My mother had made plans with my father to visit his brothers and sisters in Australia. This was the one thing that was going to get him out of the country to see his

siblings who had emigrated to Australia after the war. My father had never travelled abroad during his life and did not even own a passport.

23. My parents were deeply in love and had a very intellectual relationship. They were both very intelligent. I remember how they used to love exchanging quotes from Shakespeare. My father suffered enormously from mother's death. Her death ruined my father. My sister and I used to hear his heartfelt sobs coming from their bedroom upstairs. My father never took that trip to Australia.
24. The death of my mother had an impact on all, on me, our family and brought great surprise to those who had known her well by virtue of the fact that she had always been a fit and healthy lady. I was 39 years old when my mother died. I left home shortly after my mother's death so I didn't have lots of conversations with my father about how he was feeling.
25. My father eventually carried on and he recovered as much as he could and my sister stayed with my father in our parents' home in Woodford Green until she also died.
26. We are Christians so there was a religious element in our handling of our bereavement at this time. We accepted that our mother had died as a natural bereavement and we didn't beat ourselves up about it at the time.
27. There were no financial effects of either the infection or the treatment on my mother. My mother and father both had the benefit of state and teachers pensions. If my mother had retired early she would have received a slightly lower pension but my gut feeling is that she retired before she became ill. My father, sister and I just carried on with our lives.

28. In terms of stigma, I do not know if anyone knew of the cause of my mother's death but I do remember that everyone was surprised when she died because they had always seen her fit and healthy. We never hid our mother's illness or cause of illness and if anyone asked us about it we would have told them.
29. A couple of years later after my mother's death I found out that my mother might have been infected with HIV, HCV and or Hepatitis B through a programme broadcast on BBC either Panorama or Tomorrow's World. It was this television programme which gave us the first indication of the cause of my mother's death The programme was reporting on an epidemic of hepatitis in Africa and an auto-immune disease later termed 'AIDS', believed to have been caught from monkeys.
30. My sister and I immediately recognised they were reporting on the same symptoms which my mother had exhibited when she had fallen ill. When the programme started to talk about infected blood as a result of blood transfusions we began to realise that that is how our mother might have caught hepatitis and the auto immune disease as a result of the blood transfusion she had received. We could not see how else she could have contracted it.
31. If we hadn't seen the BBC programme my sister and I would never have known anything. We never made the connection until then. It was after this documentary that we started asking questions. In 1981 one of my cousins, Howard Marchant-Williams, a doctor in Australia, came over to the UK while my mother was in hospital. I spoke to him recently and he recollected that he telephoned one of my mother's treating hospitals to try to clarify exactly what her illness was at that time. He was told that it was 'a form of hepatitis'.

32. After watching the Panorama programme my sister and I experienced a new and fresh wave of feelings at the circumstances of our mother's death. We were angry at what the programme had revealed to us. We felt surprised, shocked, sad, angry and upset.
33. We felt incredibly upset in the knowledge that our mother need not have died and experienced feelings of sadness, anger and upset knowing that our mother's life had been cut short.
34. My sister and I were not angry with the medical profession. We thought the blood our mother had been given had been given in ignorance and the doctors had been doing their best and they had not known it was contaminated. We assumed they had not known of the dangers of infection. We had no reasons to suspect they knew more than us.
35. Our father was made aware of the information that was revealed from the TV documentary. My father did not have a lot to say as he thought it was nobody's fault at the time.
36. There was no conscious mental impact on myself and my sister following this newfound information. Other than speaking to our cousin we didn't make any further enquiries of the medical profession. We didn't have lots of conversations about it or talk about it regularly. Our understanding was that the medical profession simply didn't know.
37. The Panorama programme only dealt with how the disease came about. It did not raise any issues of medical negligence so there was no reason to get worked up about anything.
38. The only continuing impact was the impact on my parents in their enjoyment of their retirement and the emotional impact on me and my sister referred to at 45 and 46 below. The real impact was on my father and the quality of his life, which was not what they both had planned.

39. Until now we had accepted our mother's death as a natural bereavement but the programme had now opened a question mark. Speaking for my sister, if this new information caused an impact on her I would say only her late husband or my late father may have known about as she never aired it with me. Ostensibly, she showed no reaction.
40. My sister died on the 23 December 2015 of a malignant melanoma. My father also passed away at the age of 93 on the 23 January 1996. This was 14 years after my mother had died and he was 12 years older than my mother.
41. I have recently become aware of the work of the Infected Blood Inquiry and the suggestion that the medical profession knew the risks involved in the transmission of blood and blood products. I therefore applied for my mother's medical records so that I could establish exactly what happened and when and what information was known to the doctors at the time she became ill. I received a response from Bart's Trust Archives in which they confirmed that in 2012 Whipps Cross, Newham, Bart's and The London hospitals merged in 2012 to form Barts Health NHS Trust. They further confirmed that as far as patient records were concerned they did not hold admission/discharge registers, detailed case notes or operations registers. They stated that they only received transfers of archival records of Whipps Cross Hospital since 2012 and did not hold any information on the hospital's records retention practices prior to 2012. As such they advised me that they could not assist me with my application.
42. My hope now is to establish how my mother contracted hepatitis and any other infection. I am trying to establish if in fact my mother received infected blood and if the risks of infection were known by the medical professionals and could have been avoided. This would obviously be very upsetting.

43. At the present time I do not know and I have to keep an open mind. For the moment this stops me from being over angry and dwelling on it. At this point in time I do not definitively know whether my mother received or died as a result of receiving infected blood nor do I know if this step was taken recklessly or negligently or knowingly, whether the medical profession were aware of the problems and were aware of the use of this blood. At this point in time I simply do not know.
44. It is 38 years ago or so now since my mother died and my sister and father have now also passed away. The impact of losing our mother of course is that I lost my mother early when she should have gone on to live for many more years. This causes me to feel sadness and regret. I realise that she wouldn't be here today anyway because she would be 105 years old.
45. My on-going sadness is the lost years and experiences my mother and my father would have enjoyed together.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

46. I do not recall my mother receiving any advice to see her GP for further treatment or care following her diagnosis of Hepatitis nor do I remember her being advised to inform her dentist about her condition. To the best of my recollection she was never refused any treatment and she would have carried on going to her dentist. I do not believe my mother or any members of the family were offered any counselling or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

47. No applications have been made for financial assistance in connection with the issues contained in this statement nor have I or any members

of our family ever been contacted in relation to the same. My mother never received any financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

48. My primary purpose in coming forward now is because I believe there are a lot of people like me who were unaware that there was an infected blood situation in this country. The Inquiry quoted a figure of 5000 and I believe there could be a lot of people out there who don't know they are infected.
49. I want to draw to the attention of the Chair of the Inquiry, the fact that like myself, there may be lots of people around who have questioned their relative's death and feel it is too late now to prove anything. This Inquiry has encouraged me to use this opportunity to contribute to something as well as to find out the truth. The process is almost a sense of therapy. If I hadn't seen the BBC TV programme I wouldn't be here today.
50. This is an excellent inquiry and I am very impressed with the Chair. I feel that whenever I have asked any question I have received an immediate answer. This Inquiry is everything you would like something like this to be. I feel this Inquiry is very pro-active and will not leave a stone unturned without fear or favour.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

25 June 2019