

Witness Name: Doris Bridgehouse

Statement No.: WITN0961001

Exhibits: nil

Dated: 29 October 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DORIS BRIDGEHOUSE

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 10 May 2019.

I, Doris Bridgehouse, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Doris Bridgehouse. My date of birth is GRO-C 1940 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired nurse. I became a nurse in 1955; working for around twenty-five years as a District Nursing Sister for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and at Ashton-Under-Lyne Hospital. I have one daughter and I am a widow. I intend to speak about my Chronic Lymphatic Leukaemia (CLL) and that fact that I believe that a blood transfusion, which I have been told was done using infected blood was the cause of my cancer. In particular, I will talk of the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me and the impact it has had on myself and my family. I am content with my name being on this statement, GRO-B

GRO-B

Section 2. How Infected

2. In around 1975, whilst I was working as a District Nurse for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, I received a message from my supervisor instructing me to visit a new patient at his house. I was given very little information. The patient had suffered a cerebrovascular accident and so, I was assisting him into his bed and as I did, he attacked me. It was a very nasty attack and several disks in my spine were dislocated.
3. I tried to carry on visiting terminally ill patients with the assistance of my husband, who did it reluctantly for two days because he was heartbroken at my insistence.
4. Five days after the attack, I visited Mr Wilkinson an Orthopaedic Consultant for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. As soon as I was seen, before I was even examined, he requested for Mr Hannigan a Neuro Consultant at North Manchester General Hospital to see me. I was transferred by ambulance to North Manchester General Hospital for emergency surgery and immediately placed me onto morphine.
5. Following the attack, I had an emergency operation on my spine at North Manchester General Hospital, and two further spinal operations at The Oldham Royal Hospital. I was then transferred to the Manchester Royal Infirmary for further treatment.
6. Since my attack the law has changed to ensure that nurses do not visit alone on first time visits to patients.
7. I still visit the hospital now for treatment related to my spinal injury.
8. In around June 1986, I suddenly developed large swollen glands in my groin and so, I visited my GP and biopsies were taken. From the biopsy results, I was referred to the Haematologist Consultant at Manchester Royal Infirmary.

9. In July 1986, blood investigations were carried out by the Consultant Haematologist named Dr Cinkotai. She requested blood tests for HIV and leukaemia. I know this as I could see on the blood form that it noted 'query HIV and leukaemia'.
10. I was shocked to see the request for HIV and so I asked the doctor why it stated HIV. Dr Cinkotai answered 'because you were given infected blood during one of your spinal operations'. They did not know which operation the blood was given in.
11. I was never told I was given a blood transfusion during my spinal operations, so I do not know why Dr Cinkotai suggested this. I can only assume that she had seen something in my hospital notes.
12. On reflection and in reference to me having been given infected blood as stated by Dr Cinkotai there have been three occasions of which this may have occurred.
13. Prior to my daughter's birth in 1967, I remember I was given four pints of blood. I was seven and a half months pregnant, I was extremely anaemic, my blood count was below half of what it should be and so, I was given four pints of compact cells.
14. During a particularly difficult and long birth, of which I was in labour for 36 hours; resulting in my daughter being born via caesarean. I may or may not have been given a blood transfusion during the birth, however I do not have any memory of this as I was put to sleep.
15. During the three procedures I had following my spinal injury. One of the procedures placed implants into my spine. The implants are controlled by a computer in my stomach, all of which have been surgically implanted enabling me to walk.

16. Furthermore, I had my gallbladder removed in 1970 which was around 18 months after my daughter was born. It was removed because I had gallstones. I say this as it may be of some relevance to the Inquiry.
17. After the blood test was taken, I had to wait three weeks for the results to return. According to my diary that I have kept, I received these results on 6 August 1986 at an appointment with Dr Cinkotai.
18. When the results returned, I remember Dr Cinkotai asking my husband and I if we wanted 'the good or the bad news'. My husband answered 'good news first'. Dr Cinkotai said that I did not have HIV, but the bad news was that I had leukaemia. I was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphatic Leukaemia (CLL).
19. My late husband and I were absolutely devastated. For a while we could hardly talk to each other fearing the worst outcome.
20. Following the diagnosis, I had many blood tests and three bone marrow procedures; one of which was from the sternum and two from the ileac crest (the crest of the pelvis).
21. I was told that I would not have to undergo chemo or radiotherapy, and that the treatment would be to 'watch and wait'.
22. Between 1986 to 2005, I have had blood test monitoring which has gone from three times a week, to weekly, then to fortnightly and in February 1998 to monthly.
23. In March 2005, I sadly lost my husband and ever since I have had great difficulty attending hospital for my appointments. Due to this, I now attend my GP surgery for blood test monitoring annually.
24. In 2005, I was given a graph by the hospital to hand into my GP surgery. I was told that if the blood count went out of the range on the graph then

I would have to attend hospital immediately. I have been concerned by this since my bloods are only monitored annually.

25. I am currently still being monitored annually.

26. Throughout this time, I am still having to deal with the effects of my severe spinal injury.

Section 3. Other Infections

27. I am not aware of having contracted any other significant infections, but I do get general infections such as chest infections due to having acquired a low immune system.

28. I have not been tested for Hepatitis C (HCV) as this has never been suggested to me but I am currently undergoing liver function tests.

Section 4. Consent

29. I consented to the compact blood cell transfusion at seven and a half months pregnant, but I did not consent to a transfusion during my spinal operations.

30. I am not aware of ever being treated or tested without my consent.

Section 5. Impact

31. I must say that my late husband suffered as much as I did. He was devastated that I had been given infected blood and it was hard for him. He would sometimes have to carry me into the medicals because I was so ill.

32. My other family members have also suffered such as my brother. He would visit me regularly but stopped because he was afraid of what

would happen to me. The effect on other family members and friends was simply fear of the outcome.

33. I believe I have been robbed of my career, vocation, pension and my health. If it wasn't for the leukaemia I would still be working as a nurse now.

34. Since I was diagnosed with leukaemia, I have taken anaphylactic antibiotics on a daily basis.

35. I have always been in fear of developing other diseases through having a low immune system derived from the leukaemia.

36. I believe the leukaemia has slowed down my recovery process in relation to my spinal injury.

37. I continue to use crutches. I should be using a wheelchair and I could have an electric scooter but to be honest I have stopped myself through pride, vanity and my self-esteem.

38. I feel the cold severely and I suffer very badly with weather changes.

39. I have been told that I cannot donate blood because of the infected blood transfusion that I was given.

40. I still have to take extra measures to take care of myself. I am tormented with cleanliness and I am very conscious of crowds due to having such a low immune system.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

41. There has been no assistance offered to me and no form of support such as counselling.

42. I have never been given any information about the risks to others. Thankfully, I was found negative for HIV, but up until I was tested the hospital did not know this.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

43. I have never received any financial assistance as I only became aware of the infected blood scandal last year. Until I saw it on the news I did not know that it was a widespread issue. Furthermore, until I read the Rule 9 Notification sent to me by the Inquiry, I was not aware that there were any funds or trusts in existence.

Section 8. Other Issues

44. During this period of time it was a different mentality; the medical profession was trusted and whatever action taken was believed to be for the best.

45. Until Dr Cinkotai told me that I had been given infected blood, I did not even know I had been given blood during any of my spinal procedures, let alone the blood being infected. I only became aware of this information as a result of the swollen glands in my groin and the subsequent diagnosis.

46. My husband and I were very angry for some time about this unknown transfusion and the fact that we were never made aware of this.

47. I was very angry that I had been given blood that was apparently contaminated. However, I had just accepted it as I thought that I had just been unlucky and it was a rogue mistake. I have never been told or was aware that other people had also been given infected blood. I had no idea it was a widespread issue until I saw the Infected Blood Inquiry on the news last year. It rung a cord with me straight away as I had been

given infected blood too and so, I immediately got in touch with the Inquiry.

48. I would like to add that since I provided my statement to the Inquiry, I have decided to get tested for HCV GRO-C I am also undergoing a bile duct investigation and I have a mammogram for breast cancer next week. All of which I wonder whether it could be related to the blood transfusion.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

29th October 2019.