

## Section 1. Introduction

Mr Thomas Farrell

GRO-C

Date of birth: GRO-C 1935

Phone Number: GRO-C

Email: suefarrell GRO-C

My wife and I live in a two bedroom semi-detached bungalow, sitting room, bathroom, kitchen and conservatory.

My wife and I are second time married, we have been together for 34 years. I have two married daughters plus 5 grandchildren and one great grandson.

My wife has 4 children (3 sons and a daughter). Plus grandchildren.

We have a mortgage on our house, GRO-C plus a GRO-C loan GRO-C

## Section 2. How Infected

2. In 1989, I had a quadruple heart bypass at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne. I was admitted on the 9<sup>th</sup> October, operated on the 11<sup>th</sup> October and released on the 21<sup>st</sup> October.

While waiting for my operation, I had been on "aspirin" 75mg, one a day for several months. On Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, we received a phone call late in the evening to stop taking the aspirin and to report to the Freeman hospital, Newcastle, first thing on Monday morning (9<sup>th</sup>).

We lived in GRO-C at the time and my wife drove me to the hospital (1 and a half hours). On the Tuesday (10<sup>th</sup>) the surgeon and anaesthetist came and checked me over, the surgeon explained the procedure and said it was a straight forward plumbing job and because of the excellent condition I was in, I would be out running about in no time.

Later on, a junior doctor came and did a coagulation test on me. He pricked the end of my finger and timed how long it took to stop bleeding. He then said you are about 50/50 but you should be alright for your operation!

I was taken to the operating theatre early on the Wednesday morning (11<sup>th</sup>) but did not regain consciousness until late on the Friday evening (13<sup>th</sup>).

According to my wife, she was in the intensive care unit by my side from the Wednesday afternoon until the Friday night and had been advised to stay at the hospital (they gave her a room) because of the critical condition I was in.

Seemingly, after I came back from the theatre in the morning, my condition wouldn't stabilise so I was taken back to theatre in the evening and opened up again to see if there was any bleeding, as there was no bleeding I was then given 12 pints of blood before I stabilized. (It was later found out most of the blood was contaminated 9 years later).

As my wife was at my bedside during all of this she was obviously in a state of shock but the nurse on duty tried to console her as much as possible, she said there was no bleeding so it must have been the aspirin.

**3. Not applicable**

**4.** No, contaminated blood as never mentioned by anyone, although when I had a pre-op checkout at James Cook hospital, Middlesbrough, the nurse asked if I minded being tested for "aids" as they didn't want to contaminate the expensive equipment at Newcastle?

**5.** I was contaminated with "Hepatitis C" because of a blood transfusion I was given during my heart operation, out of 12 pints of blood the majority were found to be contaminated.

**6.** Nine years later. In 1998, the blood transfusion unit in Newcastle wrote to my G.P saying there was a possibility I had been given contaminated blood after my operation and was it possible I had been contaminated by any other means. My G.P wrote back saying the only source of contamination had to be at the Freeman hospital, that was when the blood transfusion unit contacted me GRO-C

- A)** We were asked to come to the blood transfusion unit and be tested for "hepatitis C" after they conducted a "lookback" survey and it was possible I had been given contaminated blood. GRO-C I was positive. I was referred to the Freeman hospital Liver section to have a series of tests: blood tests, liver scans and liver biopsy. This was done over two days so I had to stay in the hospital overnight. We were then interviewed by professor Bassendine (Lady) who then told us, rather coldly, that because of the 9 year delay, my liver was badly damaged and on a scale of 1 – 6, mine was a 6 and I would probably need a liver transplant in 4 – 5 years if they could find a liver and I was strong enough to have the operation.
- B)** No, professor Bassendine was asked about treatment but she said I was too old (64) and the treatment was too expensive. There was no advice on how to cope and as we opened the door to leave, she said, "and don't think you can sue us because there was no test for Hepatitis C before 1991". After being told I had 4.5 years to live, money was the last thing on my mind.
- C)** We asked professor Bassendine why it took nearly ten years to notify us when she knew there was a test in 1991, she replied "the supply of blood had nothing to do with the hospital and to take it up with the blood transfusion services".
- D)** The nurse at the blood transfusion unit was very non-committal, as if positives were an everyday occurrence. She wouldn't wear gloves when she took the blood samples

and emptied the syringes of blood down the sink, heaven knows how much contaminated blood was washed into the sewer system. Professor Bassendine must have been conditioned to telling so many patients they has a life threatening infection she had no empathy or sympathy for the people in front of her who had been given such bad news and were in an obvious state of shock, my wife was devastated but it took a few days for me to realise what she had told us.

- E) None whatsoever, my wife had to go to the library to find out the dangers of contamination and if there were any herbal treatments that would help my liver. One was "milk thistle", professor Bassendine said she only dealt with prescription medicines and it was up to me if I wanted to try it. I found it helped me quite a lot and if I missed any, my wife could tell straight away. I am still on it, 30 years later, even though it is quite expensive to buy. As to the risk to others, my wife found out I had to be careful if I cut myself, and I had to make sure that any cut was sterilised and bandaged. All surfaces had to be cleaned with disinfectant and all used bandages had to be put in a secure container.

### Section 3. Other Infections

7. at that time, no, but recent research has shown that "interferon" badly damages your immune system, hence the severe fatigue and being very cold all the time.

### Section 4. Consent

N/A

### Section 5. Impact

- A) My wife and I had only been together for 4 years (1985) when I had my operation (1989), and because of the complications during the operation my health was never the same. Not being able to be active and lead a normal life made me very depressed. I used to train every day, running up to 60 miles a week. I was a senior athletics coach and had 10 athletes in my group, I was a founding member of GRO-C (1986) and built the membership from 20 up to over 80, juniors, seniors and veterans. We raced track and on the roads during the summer and cross country during the winter, all this had to stop after my operation due to ill health.
- B) I was always very fatigued and had to go to bed every afternoon, it wasn't until we found out 10 years later that because I had been infected with "hepatitis C", my liver was being destroyed and this affected my energy levels.
- C) When I started a year's treatment of "Interferon" from 1999, I had to inject myself 3 times a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. The side effects were horrendous, (flu like symptoms, loss of appetite, weight drop from 10 stone to 6 stone, bedridden for a year, my wife had to put hot water bottles in my bed, day and night, I was always



cold and shivery, my wife also had to practically carry me to the toilet, bathe me and put me back in bed.

- D) When I was diagnosed with "hepatitis C" by professor Bassendine and told I would need a liver transplant in 4.5 years time, she refused to give me any treatment because "I was too old (64) and it was too expensive. My wife and I had to see our M.P Dr Marjorie Mowlem and explain what had happened and why I was being refused treatment. She told us not to worry and said she would make sure I got the treatment I needed. Two weeks later, I was asked to report to the Freeman hospital where I was told I would be starting the treatment immediately, this would last one year, January 1999 – December 1999.
- E) No, the only treatment at the time was interferon.
- F) The side effects were so bad that although I was given the option to stop the injections, it was a case of stopping the injections and risk dying or carry on and hope it stabilised my condition, this added to the stress put on my wife and myself.
- G) Because the side effects were so serious, I was made more or less bedridden for a year and the treatment of interferon 3 times a week badly damaged my immune system so that I always felt cold. My feet and hands were like blocks of ice, this meant keeping the central heating on and having hot water bottles in my bed all the time. Despite having a flu injection every year I was always catching colds and taking anti-biotics for my lungs. (Still cold feet and hands).

10. Because of the extreme fatigue and having to go to bed every afternoon, even on holidays, our social life was practically non-existent. If we visited friends, we had to be home early because of my tiredness.

11. My illness was restricted to family and close friends.

12.

- A) Because of my age when I was infected, I didn't bother with any further education.
- B) I had to take early retirement from work, I had worked since leaving school at 15 years old, I worked at I.C.I for 35 years and hoped to continue after my heart operation but due to my health I was unable. I was a senior club athletic coach and a serious athlete (trained and run 60 miles a week) but all that had to stop as well.
- C) From 1989 – 2004 we struggled to make ends meet, we had a mortgage and utility bills to pay, plus I had to pay for all my prescriptions and medications. If I hadn't had a decent I.C.I pension we could have finished up homeless.

13. My wife and I had only been together 4 years when I had my heart attack and operation, she has been my unpaid carer ever since and without her I wouldn't be here today. We were lucky to have some close friends who helped my wife with heavy work about the house or

garden

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## Section 6. Treatment

14. It took our M.P Dr Mowlem intervention before I was given treatment. We were given no advice on how to apply for care and support and it was left too my wife to struggle on for a full year to care for me 24 hours a day.

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Without her love and devotion, I wouldn't be here today.

15. No, the only person who did his very best for us was our G.P Dr Thomas, he would call every other day to check on me and if my wife had to phone him he would be there straight away.

## Section 8. Other issues

17. When I was first infected there was a firm of solicitors in Newcastle looking for victims of contaminated blood. But when I contacted them with my details they wanted me to take out an insurance policy so that if they lost my case it would pay their fees and if I won they wanted their fees plus half of any compensation Every year contaminated blood was mentioned in parliament I would write to my M.P to bring up my case but every time it was the same reply, they were sorry I had been infected and they hoped to arrange an inquiry in the very near future.

18. Being processed.

## Anonymity

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