

Witness Name: DAVID ROWELL

Statement No: WITN4137001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: April 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DAVID ROWELL

I, David Rowell, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My full name is David John Rowell. I was born on GRO-C 1965 and I live at GRO-C Derbyshire GRO-C
2. I was co- infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How infected

4. I have moderate Haemophilia A, first diagnosed in 1976 when I was 11 years old. I was treated at the Derby Haemophilia Centre at the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary under the care of Dr Main initially and then Dr Angela McKernan.

5. I believe that I was at first treated with plasma and/or cryoprecipitate. I have been treated with Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate since my early teens.
6. I was treated on an ad hoc basis as and when I needed it for tooth extractions and for accidental injuries. In 1983, I had a fair bit of treatment following a bike crash. In 1984, I had treatment ahead of a tooth extraction at Leeds St James Infirmary. On average I had treatment once every year or so. It was always in hospital and never at home.
7. Straight after what I remember to be my very first blood product treatment, I had a bad reaction to it. I was treated with a blood product that was a sticky, green/yellow substance which made me throw up. I was then laid up for days with 'jaundice' which was of course a physical manifestation of HBV. It was confirmed that I had become unwell from my 'treatment'. It was pretty much dismissed as something that 'happens sometimes' but it never happened again. Every time I had treatment after that I was invariably told that I was getting something 'new'. I do not know the names of the various products that I was given over the years but I have recently asked that the Haemophilia Centre look at my notes and let me know.
8. I do not think that there was any pre-warning of risk of infection before I had the blood product treatment. I have asked my parents but they are now in their eighties. They put their faith in the doctors. We all put our faith in the doctors.
9. I was informed that I had HCV in 2003 at an appointment quite different to my six monthly routine appointments. I was called in by Dr McKernan for an appointment and she was there with a liver specialist to inform me that I had tested HCV positive. It was a notably more formal appointment than the routine appointments I was used to, with just her. They told me what HCV was, what it does and the routes to treatment. I was told that the infection would have caused damage to my liver and the extent of that damage depended upon how long I had been infected with HCV. They were non-

specific as to when I had been infected but they did say that I had been infected with HCV from one of my past treatments.

10. I was told that I needed to have a liver biopsy in order for them to assess the level of damage and I should then start HCV clearing treatment to stop any further damage going forward.

11. The liver biopsy was very unpleasant. It was an invasive procedure in which they went in and extracted a big sliver of my liver to test. The result was that I had some scarring of the liver but it was considered 'mild damage' and 'nothing to worry about'. However the importance of starting the clearing treatment so that the condition of my liver did not worsen was reiterated to me.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I do not believe that I was infected with anything other than hepatitis. After receiving some letters about being at risk of exposure to vCJD I was subsequently reassured that I was not one of those affected.

Section 4. Consent

13. I do not remember providing specific consent to being tested for HCV. I was simply called in to a meeting to be informed that I had HCV. That said I have always expected and trusted my doctors to be testing my blood for anything harmful to me. Blood samples are taken at my six monthly appointments for monitoring (of levels and inhibitors etc) purposes. I have never knowingly had an HIV test but I would have expected to be tested for it and to be informed if I had contracted it.

14. HIV was a huge concern to me in the 1980s up until I was assured that the FVIII concentrate was heat treated and no longer a concern. I met my wife in 1992 and I am pretty certain that I was on the manufactured blood products around that time.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

15. To be informed that I had HCV came as an enormous shock to me. I was married with three young children aged just 6, 4 and 2 years old. I was the family breadwinner working full time as an IT Consultant. I couldn't afford to be unwell but I needed to get on with the clearing treatment. My mind set at the time was to 'get on with it'. Those responsible for my medical care advised me that I needed the treatment and I just thought 'OK, let's do it'. The enormity of it all caught up with me much later.

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It was a huge worry.

16. I had Ribavirin and Pegylated-Interferon treatment within a year of being told that I had HCV. There were side effects to include dry flaky skin but I pre-warned of the potential side effects and on the whole they could have been worse. The worst of it throughout the entirety of the six months was the chronic fatigue and the psychological impact of the treatment. I was completely knocked out on the first working day following the treatment every week and had to have that day off. I was irritable and tetchy. I was a complete nightmare for my wife to live with on top of looking after three young children without my support.

17. The treatment is, as I understand it, known to cause damage to the throat and stomach. I needed an endoscopy (which was very unpleasant) to check for potential damage and three monthly blood tests for a year at the conclusion of the treatment before it was confirmed that I had cleared the virus. As an aside, I find it incredibly frustrating to continue to see 'Hepatitis C Infection Risk' as a warning on my paper files and records when I go for blood tests and that I have to declare it to my dentist even though I am now clear of HCV. I am also always given the last appointment of the day when I visit my dentist.

18. I had a heart attack in March 2016 which I believe was the 'tipping point' in terms of my mental wellbeing. The news stories about HIV/AIDS to include

the risk to haemophilacs throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, my subsequent HCV diagnosis, the clearing treatment, the stress that I was under through work and finally the heart attack culminated in me having a nervous breakdown. Everything I had up until then buried in a psychological box hit me like a sledge hammer. I couldn't even get myself out of bed I was so scared. I was off work for six months and had counselling for one year. It was only through counselling that everything I had bottled up came out and I started to make sense of my own feelings. I have only recently got back to normal in terms of anxiety and stress levels.

19. My wife and children have been hugely impacted. My wife had to pick up the slack again during my psychological crisis. I was made redundant six months after I returned to work although my company said that the redundancy and my time off work were not connected.

20. My parents do not like to talk about me being infected with HCV. My mother in particular is defensive about the subject. I think that she feels that she should have questioned the doctors on what they were doing to her son when they gave me the infected treatment. She, like other parents, just put her faith in the doctors.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

21. I had Ribavirin and Pegylated-Interferon treatment within a year of being told that I had HCV. I had six months of treatment at the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham.

22. I was only offered counselling when I had my nervous breakdown. The counselling was recommended by my GP.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

23. I have not had any problems with the trusts and funds. I received the one off Stage 1 Skipton Fund payment and currently receive financial assistance through EIBSS.

Section 8. Other Issues

24. There are no other issues.

Anonymity

25. No anonymity is required.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..... **GRO-C**

Dated 24 April 2020.