

Witness Name: V Whistler
Statement No: WITN4143001
Exhibits: 0
Dated: April 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF VALERIE WHISTLER

I, Valerie Whistler, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Valerie Whistler and I was born on [GRO-C] 1965. I live at [GRO-C] [GRO-C], Gloucestershire, [GRO-C].
2. I make this statement as the affected wife of David Andrew Whistler, who has Haemophilia B and was born on [GRO-C] 1971. He was infected with Hepatitis C via contaminated Factor IX concentrates. He has provided a witness statement to the Inquiry under witness number **WITN1603001**.
3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my husband's full medical records.**

Section 2. How Affected

4. I refer to my husband's witness statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

5. I refer to my husband's witness statement.

Section 4. Consent

6. I refer to my husband's witness statement.

Section 5. Impact

7. I first met David in 2003 at Silverstone during the Formula 1 Grand Prix weekend. We were camping in the same garden and although at the time we were not romantically involved, I was immediately attracted to his gentle, funny and laid back personality. He recounted to me a story about his dog, which made me laugh and demonstrated his caring personality at its best.
8. We met again the following year whilst he was undergoing treatment for Hepatitis C. On this occasion he was quieter, more subdued and seemed very fatigued but I understood that he was undergoing a very aggressive treatment and thought that explained the change in him.
9. After this meeting, David withdrew himself from the company of the group of friends we had known and became much more introverted. He stopped taking part in the activities and meetings we had together so I lost contact with him.
10. We resumed contact in 2009 when I sent him a Facebook friend request and he responded. We started talking via messages as we lived at opposite ends of the country and over the period of the next year we became romantically involved. During this first year, I only saw David at the weekends. He sometimes seemed tired and when tired he found it hard to control his mood or temper but, at that point, I did not see the whole picture as we were not living together full time.

11. We moved in together in 2010 with my 9 year old daughter, Amelia, and got married in 2011. It was only after we began living together as a family that the extent of David's symptoms became apparent. He was often seriously fatigued and I really don't mean tired; I mean properly fatigued, completely unable to do continue to do things. His mind would lose its focus and he could not concentrate. The only thing to do was for him to go to bed and sleep but this seriously impacted what we could do and plan as family, as anything arranged could be cancelled at short notice, causing real disappointment. On many occasions, my daughter and I ended up having to go to events alone as David was unable to attend or join in due to his extreme fatigue.
12. The extreme fatigue also affected Amelia and me in that we had to be totally responsible for everything that happened around the house as by the weekend David was generally too exhausted to be able to help with the normal tasks taken on by every household. This made things quite difficult for Amelia who was desperately trying to form a bond with her new parent but didn't totally understand why he was always tired.
13. However, fatigue was the easiest of the symptoms. The worst was David's temperament. He had become intolerant and his temper would flare unexpectedly, causing many upsets. David had gone from possibly the mellowest person I knew to someone who had real difficulties controlling his anger and would snap without warning; particularly at Amelia, who was only a child.
14. David had no tolerance for having a child around the house, making noise and doing what children do! He shouted at her which was not something she was accustomed to, as she and I are not the sort of people who raise our voices. We always talked every situation out but that became impossible with David as his temper was sudden and explosive, especially as he became fatigued.
15. It was difficult for Amelia as she missed out on lots of normal childhood activities, like having her friends over for sleepovers, as we could never predict if David was going to cope with the situation.

16. Fortunately, Amelia is a kind and tolerant girl and we frequently talked about the situation, with me trying to help her understand that David loved her very much but that due to his illness and treatment was sometimes unable to help his behaviour. It was really complicated at times, but we managed to keep the family together as we both love David very much and know that he loves us too.
17. It was also noticeable that after periods of rest David's mood completely mellowed again. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that his explosive and moody outbursts are directly attributable to the amount of fatigue he is carrying at any given time.
18. It has been a turbulent journey and it is only because Amelia and I are both mild tempered and love David very much, that we have been able to make our family situation work. It has not been easy living with someone whose behaviour is completely unpredictable. Sometimes it has been like walking on eggshells, Amelia and I in one room whispering so David does not get disturbed and thus become moody and angry.
19. It is also fair to say that, over the years, David has learned to manage his energy expenditure, making sure that he does not overtire himself and, consequently, he is better able to control his outbursts and recognises when he is need of rest before it becomes a problem. This does, however, still continue to impact the way we are able to lead our lives as we must be constantly aware of David's level of fatigue.
20. Without a doubt, David's personality has been changed by the Hepatitis C and subsequent treatment for the same. He has been altered dramatically, changing the course of his life and inevitably mine and Amelia's through our contact with him.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

21. I refer to my husband's witness statement.

22. I was never offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of my husband's infections.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

23. I refer to my husband's witness statement.

Section 8. Other Issues

24. I can't deny that I feel totally horrified at what has happened. The contaminated blood scandal was an absolute travesty that befell a huge number of people. In my view, decision makers at the top knew that these poor people were being infected and then failed to ensure that they were told, in a timely fashion, about their infection.

25. I have witnessed first hand the terrible damage this has done to David. He is such a lovely person who grew up with Haemophilia yet never once complained. I think it is ingrained in him to just "*get on with things*". On top of this, he now has to deal with Hepatitis C yet bravely soldiers on through the fatigue. I feel that what has happened to him is so wrong. It is terribly sad to watch someone you love so much deal with something that was knowledgeably inflicted upon them. David, and all those other poor people, deserves the truth to come out of this Inquiry.

26. There is also an element of stress on me because I have to keep a full time job to try and ensure that we have some sort of financial stability in the future and are able to make firm monetary plans for our retirement.

Anonymity

27. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I am happy to give oral evidence if it will assist the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.. GRO-C

Dated....25/4/2020.....