

Witness Name: Digby Carrington-Howell

Statement No: WITN5231001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: NOVEMBER 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIGBY CARRINGTON-HOWELL

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I, Digby Carrington-Howell, will say as follows:-

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Digby Carrington-Howell. I was born on GRO-C 1964 and I live at GRO-C Warwickshire GRO-C.
2. My son, James Michael Carrington-Howell (born on GRO-C 1982), was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products. He was killed in a car crash on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2000, aged 18.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to James' full medical records.

## Section 2. How Affected

4. James had mild Haemophilia B. He was under the care of Dr Strevens at the Coventry and Warwickshire Haemophilia Centre at the University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire (UHCW).
5. James was treated with Factor IX (FIX) concentrate on just two occasions, for an operation on his foot (at aged 1) in 1983 or 1984 and in 1986 or 1987 for a tooth extraction.
6. We were not warned of any risk before James had the FIX treatment.
7. We did not know that James was infected with HCV until 1998. James was called in for a routine blood test and we were asked to return later for the results. My wife, Patricia, and I were not the least concerned, being told that it was nothing to worry about and they were merely checking up on their haemophiliac patients.
8. All three of us (James, Patricia and I) were called into the consulting room for the results, to be told that James had HCV. There had been no mention of anything being wrong up until that point. James was 16 years old. Dr GRO-D asked James to then leave the room to enable him to talk to us privately. The way we were told was inhumane. It was not at all handled well. We were dazed by it. We didn't know how, why or what to do. We were left to get on with it, feeling as if we were still in the dark.
9. The Haemophilia Society was good and pointed us in the direction of seminars to help explain what had happened and what might happen to James. I am a science teacher and understood the implications. Given the impact of being infected with HCV on the liver, we wanted to make sure James looked after himself because we knew how vital that was to him maintaining a sense of a

normal life. There was talk about a possible liver biopsy, but that creates bleeding complications, and about a liver transplant. Someone even said having a liver transplant would sort out the haemophilia issue. I didn't want James to ever end up having a liver transplant and having to take immunosuppressant drugs his whole life.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

10. James was not infected with anything other than HCV. GRO-C  
GRO-C which upset James as he was worried by the thought that he might have passed it on to us.

### **Section 4. Consent**

11. We were not pre-warned of any risk to James through his FIX treatment.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

12. Every parent thinks their children are the best but James really was the most lovely, kind and considerate young man. He really was. James was very bright. He had a full understanding of what had happened to him and the implications of being infected with HCV. He was also very private, he kept his worries and concerns to himself, he didn't want to upset his mother.

13. Having HCV was like living under a cloud. It was a big worry. It also had associations with HIV/AIDS. We felt like lepers. It most certainly knocked James' confidence. I have recently been in contact with some of his friends and asked if James had told them about it. They were not aware of it. When they went out to a pub or club in the evening, he would look after their wallets for them and made sure they got them home safely. He wouldn't drink himself because of the risk to his liver.

14. James applied for a job at a supermarket and came to ask me what to put down to the question about health on the application form. I said to him 'I think for the safety of others you should put it down'. He got a call almost straight away saying there was no job for him. This impacted him, I think. It was a taste of how the world saw him and how he would be treated due to his infection. Our GP advised James not to disclose it because it was no business of anyone else. Thus, in subsequent applications he didn't put HCV down. This too affected him, not being able to be open and honest with people. James had planned to study History at Manchester University.

15. As a father, I worried about James and what the future held for him. I worried about his health. I worried about him ever being able to get medical insurance, life insurance and/or a mortgage. I remember confiding in my Headteacher about my worries and he said 'we will deal with each thing as it arises'. It was sensible, welcomed advice.

16. I was also concerned about the affect HCV would have on a potential girlfriend or wife to James and future children. It was implicit in a conversation we had together that James was aware of the issue of infecting someone else. James was a good looking, blue-eyed boy with blond hair but he had problems with his feet and his teeth and was self-conscious. He was a shy, tender and sensitive boy. We met a girl James was sweet on at the memorial held for the boys killed in the accident and that was upsetting.

## **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

17. James did not have any HCV clearing treatment. No counselling or psychological support was offered to us. We had some bereavement counselling through losing our son suddenly at a young age in tragic circumstances. In light of that, being infected with HCV took a back seat.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

18. We received the ex gratia Stage 1 payment from the Skipton Fund upon advice received from the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield.

**Anonymity**

19. I do not wish to remain anonymous and understand that this Statement will be disclosed for publication to the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

29 November 2020