

Witness Name: GARETH ADAMS

Statement No: WITN5235001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: November 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GARETH ADAMS

I, Gareth Adams, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Gareth Adams. I was born on GRO-C 1981 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C Suffolk GRO-C.
2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I have mild Haemophilia B, diagnosed at birth and I am under the care of Dr Baglin at The Haemophilia Comprehensive Care Centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital (AH) in Cambridge.
5. I was treated with Factor IX (FIX) concentrate as and when required as I had a few injuries, mainly through playing football. My parents weren't warned of any problems or issues with the treatment. They were told that it was a great thing and would help me to live as normal a life as possible. If I needed FIX concentrate, I was seen at AH, transferred to the Haemophilia Unit, injected and sent home, all in the space of around 15 to 20 minutes. At aged 12 or 13, I was able to self-administer the FIX concentrate at home, making life even easier for everyone.
6. At aged 16, I was moved on to BeneFix treatment. It was around that age that my parents told me that I was infected with HCV through my FIX treatment. They themselves were told by Dr Baglin that I was infected with HCV some time before that, but they didn't want to tell me as I was a child. I got bullied at school for being a haemophiliac. GRO-C had the same experience. Haemophilia wasn't understood and was associated with HIV/AIDS. Parents of friends would not let them play with me through fear that their kids would catch something from me. Because of that, my parents kept information tight and didn't want me to suffer further through having it.
7. My parents were very protective of me and tried to reassure me as best they could when they had to tell me I was HCV positive. They did not want to worry me but were probably very worried themselves. They were waiting for further and better information from AH about how to move forward.

8. I had a liver biopsy at the age of 12 or 13 and was bed ridden for two weeks. **GRO-C** **GRO-C** had one the month before. I do not know why and believe now that I may then have been known to be HCV positive. **GRO-C** was also infected with HCV. The cover story I was given was that the continued use of FIX concentrate over time can cause a bit of liver damage.
9. I do not believe that very much information was provided to help us understand and/or manage the infection. I think that my parents were told that I should carry on as before.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I am not infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent.

11. Blood samples were taken at all my six-monthly check up appointments. To find out that I had been infected with a virus, not told that I was being tested for infection and not even told that I had been at risk of infection resulted in me losing all faith in the medical profession. I was hostile and suspicious of them and just didn't want to be lied to or tricked into becoming sicker again. I caused a scene at one particular appointment in front of two senior doctors and several student doctors, telling them to stop quizzing me and that I was probably healthier than all of them. I then stopped attending all my appointments resulting in many an argument with my Dad. I took the treatment they delivered, completed the form and posted it back. I had no interest in going to see or listening to the doctors. I had already suffered through being a haemophiliac. For a long while, I wouldn't take my treatment at all. I reasoned that my Grandad had coped with his haemophilia without treatment in his day and so could I.

Section 5. Impact

12. As stated, to learn that I was infected with HCV had a profound effect on me, not least when the worst-case scenario was eventually spelled out and I was told that I might be reliant on a transplant to survive. That was traumatic and something I decided to try to block out. Psychologically my attitude was very much 'I'm done with them (my doctors) as they were supposed to have helped me and I no longer have any trust in them whatsoever.' I decided to not put myself at further risk and to deal with the pain from my bleeds by myself. I did everything I wasn't supposed to do. At the age of 18 I joined an adult football team (and played for 20 years). I was told that I couldn't get tattoos and now I am pretty much covered in them (my friend is a trusted Tattooist with in-depth knowledge of haemophilia).
13. In 2006 I became a first-time father to a daughter (the first of three children) and it was only at around that time and with the realisation that other people now relied upon me did I give the Haemophilia Centre another chance. I needed to keep myself alive for as long as possible for my daughter. I was also starting to have problems with my legs and ankles and I wanted to be the sort of father who was able to run around with his children.
14. My mechanism for coping is to not talk about any of it. Some of my closest friends are not aware that I have haemophilia. I told my wife when we first talked of living together in the context of needing space for my kids to stay at weekends and a large fridge with space for my Benefix treatment.
15. GRO-C and I were young men with our whole lives ahead of us when we learned we were infected with HCV. I consider myself very lucky to have my wife and my three children. I believe it could have been a lot worse for me had my health failed or had I been infected with HIV and had developed AIDS.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

16. I cleared HCV a few years ago. It was my first attempt and the treatment was in tablet form. I may have been offered psychological support but if so, I never went. I'm good at burying my head in the sand and dealing with issues that way.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

17. I had a Stage 1 Skipton Fund payment in the sum of £20,000 and have not had any problems with the Trusts and Funds.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

18. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....
Dated.....

GRO-C

05/12/2020