

Witness Name: Sarah Fearis

Statement No: WITN5236001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: January 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SARAH FEARIS

I, Sarah Fearis, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Sarah Fearis. I was born on **GRO-C** 1980 and I live at **GRO-C**
GRO-C.
2. My father, Allen Jon White (born on **GRO-C** 1953), was infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) through contaminated Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate. He died on 7th November 1991, aged 38.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's medical records. I believe that they were all destroyed.
4. My mother, Christine White-Cannon has provided her own Statement to the Inquiry (Witness Number WITN1035)

Section 2. How Affected

5. My father (Dad) had severe Haemophilia A. He was treated at the Bradford Haemophilia Centre at the Bradford Royal Infirmary (BRI) under the care of Dr Liakat Parapia.
6. Dad found out some time in the mid-1980s that he was infected with HIV through a batch of FVIII which was given to him while my mother (Mum) was expecting my younger sister, Naomi, who was born GRO-C 1982.
7. We attended most of Dad's clinic appointments with him as a family. The support there was amazing. I remember we had Christmas parties at the Centre and day trips out. We took a trip to London and went to see the sights and watched as dad coughed up blood on the tube platform. I couldn't understand why he suddenly moved away from us but then realised that there was something wrong and mum trying to keep us occupied while he tried to shield us from what was happening so not to scare us.
8. I had a happy childhood filled with love and laughter. We took amazing day trips such as Southport beach where we drove the car on the beach while sitting on dad's lap, national trust properties and speedway all over the country. But as I got older, Dad needed to spend a couple of days in bed both before and after. Before long he couldn't manage to do the trips without a wheelchair and we would take turns, between me and my sister, to push dad. Eventually, he couldn't manage to come at all, and we would take leftovers from pizza hut or McDonalds home for him after our day out.
9. I am unable to comment as to whether my Dad was warned of risk before he was given FVIII concentrate (except that I doubt it) as he had his first treatment long before I was born. My parents were always honest about the situation and

dad was very involved with the media and the fight for justice. He went to speak in schools and appeared on tv and radio in order to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS and safe sex in order to try and stop the spread of the disease.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I found out in recent years that Dad was tested for the Non-A Non-B Hepatitis Virus, but he was not infected.

Section 4. Consent

11. As there is no proof of it, I am unable to comment as to whether Dad was ever treated or tested without his knowledge, consent, full information or for the purpose of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

12. I refer to my mother's Statement as an overview of the impact of the infection on Dad and our family.

13. I was just 11 years old when my Dad died. When he became unwell, I remember Dad suffering with PCP pneumonia and the nebuliser in his room. I remember the Portocath in his chest to enable his medication to be administered directly into his vein. Back then and to a child who knows nothing else, it all becomes normal.

14. Dad also suffered with a form of dementia affecting Dad's mental state. He would send me, a 10-year old child, to the cash till for his money because of an unreasonable fear that Mum was stealing his money. I had the pin number on my arm and told to keep my sleeve pulled down over it.

15. Mum and Dad had disturbed nights with Mum having to change Dad's bedding midway through. Mum was Dad's carer whilst also studying for her degree. I don't know how she managed. As a result, we needed a lot of support. A neighbour walked our dog. Naomi and I were collected from school and spent so much time with our Grandma. Our Grandparents were with us all the time. It is a lot to process after the fact. It wasn't a normal childhood for us after Dad became unwell. I can see that now I am an adult. My husband's childhood was very different to mine. I didn't know Dad was dying until Dad developed full blown AIDS and was told that he had 18 months to live. Luckily, we got more than that.

16. Within 4 years of Dad's death everything changed. Mum was on her own with two children. She remarried and we had the upheaval of leaving our family home and moving to Essex. My whole world was different.

17. I returned to the North of England when I was 19 years old. I suffer with ongoing depression. I wasn't fully aware of it at the time, but I believe that my struggle with depression started when I was 16 years old. I have abandonment issues and anger issues attributable (in part at least) to the ripple effect of what happened to my Dad. Despite losing Dad, I feel lucky that the rest of us still have each other. It is a distressing experience for any family to go through and I would like answers not least for the other families that have had to deal with more trauma than us. This is a tragedy that should have been avoided.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

18. I am immensely proud of my dad and the things he achieved but will always wonder what my life would be like now if he was still here and not been infected. My mum, sister and I have all struggled with depression and have needed treatment and counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

19. My father received financial assistance through the MacFarlane Trust (MFT).
My mother received a grant towards Dad's funeral costs through the MFT and
a small monthly payment for Naomi and me after Dad's death until we came of
age.

Anonymity

20. I do not want to be anonymous and I 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. 13/01/21