

Witness Name: Roy George Rencher

Statement No. WITN3556001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 19 August 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROY GEORGE RENCHER

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 3 July 2019.

I, Roy George Rencher, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Roy George Rencher. My date of birth and my address are known to the Inquiry. I am married and have three children, two boys and a daughter. I used to work as a sales representative and I am now a driving instructor.
2. I intend to speak about my father, George Fredrick Rencher, who passed away in October 1984, aged seventy, after receiving an infected blood transfusion.
3. In particular, the nature of his illness, how he became infected, how the illness affected him and led him to a sudden death, and the impact this had on my family and me.
4. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry Team to assist me with my statement. My sister Georgina Ann

Jefferies, who has given evidence to the Inquiry too, also assists me, as these events took place over thirty years ago.

Section 2. How Infected

5. My father was born on GRO-C 1914 and he married my mother Gladys on 23 December 1944. He had always been a healthy man; he worked as an assembler until he was sixty-five when he retired. He never had any blood disorder in the past and he had never received any blood products before he started to have blood transfusion in 1984.
6. On Christmas day 1983, he started feeling unwell. I remember that he did not eat his dinner and went home very early; it was very strange of him. After this episode, everything changed: it was like he did not feel like doing anything, he was always languid, he kept saying that he was not feeling well and that he was sweating a lot
7. In January 1984, he went to see his GP, Dr Sankrayga, as he was feeling really tired and had sores in his mouth. The GP sent him to do some blood tests, which showed that his blood count was really low. We therefore took him to the General Hospital in Birmingham, where further tests were conducted.
8. My father was diagnosed with what they called a "pre-leukaemia condition". I clearly remember that at the time, we did not understand what this meant; nobody explained to us what it was and what it entailed. To treat this condition, my father was told that he had to receive blood transfusions every four to six weeks at the hospital. This simply made sense to us, as we knew leukaemia is a blood disease and we thought his diagnosis was a similar one. I was a sales representative at the time, which gave me flexibility to drive him to the General Hospital in Birmingham to receive his transfusions. After every treatment, he would always come back home feeling much better.

9. During this period the doctors kept on running regular check-ups but no other treatment was prescribed; my father did not have to take any tablets, only transfusions.
10. Around June/July 1984, we were informed that my father had to stay overnight in hospital, as he had a temperature and he had developed what appeared to be large red wounds all over his body. We were told that it seemed like he had a bad reaction to a blood transfusion. I had the impression that the doctors did not seem to know what was actually going on with him. When he felt better, my mother took him home, but she had to take him back to hospital for the same reasons again at the end of the summer, in September 1984.
11. My mother and I would regularly ask the doctors what was going on with him and we tried to look for answers, but we were always told they were still investigating his condition. My father's health was clearly deteriorating; we were all very worried about him and confused at the same time, as no clear diagnosis had been given to us.
12. One day, a consultant came from London and spoke to my mother. I don't know his name but I know that he informed her that my father had received a contaminated blood transfusion and he was infected. However, he did not specify the nature of the infection. My mother did not ask any further questions, as she was not the type of person to question doctors' decisions. She would listen to them and simply do what they were telling her to do.
13. This situation of uncertainty went on until 5 October 1984, when we received a call from the hospital. Totally out of the blue, they asked us to come in as my father was very ill. But when my mother and I arrived at the hospital around 11pm, we were told that he had already passed away.
14. We were shocked; we had no idea of what had happened. They told us over the phone that he was very ill and by the time we arrived to his room, he was dead. After ten months only, since he felt unwell on Christmas Day, he was

dead. The cause of death on his death certificate was septicaemia. However, to this day, my family and I have never been told why my father developed sores on his body and why he passed away so quickly.

15. Later on, when AIDS started to come out in the news, my sister Georgina and I started to wonder whether he had actually contracted HIV as a result of the contaminated blood transfusion he received, as he seemed to have the same symptoms as people dying from HIV were showing at the time. It was really uncanny.

16. To the best of my knowledge, my mother, my sister and I were never tested for HIV or Hepatitis. My mother died of a heart attack aged ninety.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. To the best of my knowledge, I am not sure which type of infection or infections my father contracted through his contaminated blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

18. My father consented to receiving blood transfusions, but I do not believe that he ever received appropriate information, simply because he would never ask any questions.

19. I do not think he was ever told that his blood had been tested for any infections, and as such, never consented to this.

20. To the best of my knowledge, I do not think my father was ever tested for the purpose of research.

Section 5. Impact

21. As mentioned above, my father developed extremely painful sores all over his body. I visited him regularly in hospital, and I can remember him complaining

about the wounds. He was also a bit of a proud person, so it was difficult for him to see his body in that condition.

22. On one occasion, I asked him to show me his wounds. I was staggered and alarmed when I saw them: they were about two inches in diameter, completely open and red. They were all over his back, his legs and his face. They looked extremely sore. He was in real agony.

23. At that point, he wasn't himself anymore and he was really confused. He had always been a bit of an introvert person, and he never made a fuss about anything but he seemed to know that he was going to die soon. One day, my wife, who was pregnant at the time, told him that the baby she was expecting was a boy; my father replied to her: "Why are you telling me this for? I won't be here"; we were really upset by his answer.

24. My father's condition and subsequent death had a great impact on myself and on my family. The fact that we never knew the cause of his illness, was very difficult for us. My mother in particular did not understand what was going on, and she did not know how to deal with the whole situation.

25. After seeing the consultant from London, she asked to take my father home. However, this was refused to her as the consultant, without explaining what he meant with his words, said that she could have not been able to cope with his condition. She was really upset that she could not take him home and care for him herself.

26. When my father passed away, I saw his body; nowadays I am not sure it has been a good choice as it had been very distressing for me. We were all devastated and totally confused by the mysterious circumstances of his death.

27. He went from being a quite and healthy person to a dying man covered in sores and wounds. Everything happened so quickly; it wasn't like cancer that can go on for months and months; in ten months he was dead.

28. With hindsight, I wish I had been stricter about getting precise answers and obtaining information from the doctors about my father's wounds. I should have pushed them harder to find out the truth.

29. To this today, it is difficult for me to think that I did not do everything I could to find out what actually happened to my father; I do not recall what his treatment consisted of, when he was admitted last into the hospital.

30. After my father passed away, I talked about what happened to many people, as I still wanted to find out what had actually happened. However, I did not remember suffering any stigma as a result of sharing these events with people out of the family.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

31. I do not recall my father facing any obstacles or difficulties in obtaining treatment. However, I remember that when he was last admitted to hospital, he was put in a separate room in a side ward, away from the general ward; I don't know why this happened and nobody ever gave me an explanation.

32. Neither my father nor I were ever offered any counselling or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. As my father was never officially diagnosed with any infection, we did not receive any financial assistance from any of the Trusts and Funds set up to assist people infected with HIV or Hepatitis, and their families.

Section 8. Other Issues

34. I have not been involved in any litigation or campaigning groups. I have been asked whether I have any expectation from this Inquiry. I would like to know the real cause of death of my father, as I believe we were not told the truth.

35. I wish to know whether he was really given an infected blood transfusion, what he was infected with and the reasons behind his death.

36. If he has really been killed by a contaminated blood transfusion and if negligence from the doctors can be identified, I wish to obtain compensation.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

19-8-2019