

Witness Name: Gail McKinney

Statement No.: WITN3681001

Exhibits: nil

Dated: 12/09/2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GAIL MCKINNEY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11 September 2019.

I, Gail McKinney, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name Gail McKinney. My date of birth is GRO-C 1955 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am the middle child of three sisters. I am married with two children, one boy and one girl.
2. I intend to speak about my father's infection with Hepatitis B through a blood transfusion, and his subsequent death within GRO-C months of receiving this transfusion. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, and the impact his illness and death had on our lives.
3. The process of anonymity has been explained to me, and I have chosen not to seek anonymity.

Section 2. How Infected

4. My account of the events leading to my father's infection, diagnosis and death are largely the same as those provided by my sister (W3682). Please refer to her statement for the full account. However there are some aspects where our recollections differ that I would like to discuss here.
5. When my dad took ill over Easter of 1976, just before he was admitted to Friarage Hospital, I do remember mam saying that when she had called the doctor to try and get him to come out to see dad, the doctor had refused and said it was 'probably just the flu'. I think that the doctor on call at that time was not our usual GP, so he did not know about dad's medical history and his recent heart surgery – if it had been our usual GP I am sure he would have come out as soon as mum called.
6. As far as we all know, dad was only diagnosed with Hepatitis B on the 5 May 1976, GRO-C However, we were not in the hospital every minute of every day, so it is possible that one of the nurses or doctors had told dad what was wrong with him. Our dad was a proud man and always wanted to protect us, so maybe dad being dad decided not to tell us, or asked the doctors to keep it a secret. I wonder about this a lot because the nurses and doctors must have been going to see him when we were not there, and his arms were mottled from all the blood they had taken for testing, so who knows what was really said?
7. My sister Ann (W3682) recalls that dad was given a one off injection to make him more comfortable on the day we were told about the Hepatitis B. I do not recall the name of the injection or how it was administered, but I think that it was just something to make him more comfortable. I am not sure if it definitely was just a one off injection, or if they were giving him constant pain relief, because I know that years later when mum died in 2012, GRO-C

GRO-C

However Ann was there at the time and was led to believe that it was a one-off injection, and back then the doctor's word was gospel so you didn't ask questions – you only knew exactly what the doctors and nurses wanted you to know.

8. I do not know if dad was in pain while he was in Friarage. He was definitely uncomfortable, but like I said dad was very proud and wanted to keep us protected and didn't want to make us upset, so he never specifically told us that he was in pain.
9. When dad was in Friarage Hospital I already had a child. Children were not allowed into the side room where dad was and visiting hours were at night, so while he was at Friarage I was not able to visit him as often as I would have liked. Instead, I used to go in the afternoon with my son and hold him up to the glass window so that dad could see him. Dad loved it when I did this. This was the case on the day dad was diagnosed GRO-C so I was not present when the doctor told Ann that dad had Hepatitis B. The only thing I remember is that Ann said the doctor was very young.
10. My dad was a fun loving man. He didn't drink, never had a bad word about anyone and was a family man. Apart from darts and playing bingo, he had no vices, so I do not believe he could have contracted Hepatitis B in any other way.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I do not believe that my father was infected with anything other than Hepatitis B through the blood transfusion he received.

Section 4. Consent

12. Please refer to my sister's statement (WITN3682001).

Section 5. Impact

13. After my father's heart operation he honestly came alive again. He loved to work and before the heart operation he had been advised not to do any manual labour. Mum used to make me stay home and watch him because he wouldn't stop working. Back then a heart operation was a huge and very intensive thing, so for him to make it through and for it to be a success made him so happy. He was a different person afterwards and was so excited to get on with life and get back to work. For the Hepatitis B to just hit him out of nowhere and escalate so quickly, our worlds fell apart.
14. I loved my dad greatly. When dad was alive we were a family – we went on holidays together and had Sunday lunches and Christmas all together. Then it all suddenly changed and life was very different. My relationship with my mother deteriorated after dad died and got worse as she got older. After everything she had been through with dad, she always felt that everyone owed her something and became really bitter.
15. My dad's death put a strain on my marriage too. I was only 19 years old when I married my husband. Although he was close with my dad, my husband did not have the same relationship I had with my dad with his own father, so he could not understand why I was so upset when dad died. We even separated for a year or so when I was 21. This was not long after my dad had died, and I had lost a baby in between. I think it was all related to the stress caused by dad's sudden death.
16. I always talk to my children and grandchildren about my father and try to keep his memory alive, but I think it is hard for them to understand or comprehend. At least he got to meet two of his grandchildren - he even named my son Michael after his dad – but he never got to meet any of the girls. My mum loved her grandchildren and really favoured the boys. I think that's because she had all girls and she knew how much my dad would have loved to have a little boy.

17. Dad loved anything to do with mechanics; once when we took the ferry over to Ireland, he insisted on going down to have a look at the ferry's engine. He would have loved to have a little boy to do this with. I remember one time Janet and I were at mams house with our little boys and dad turned up in a brand new fire truck. He sat our little boys on his lap and was over the moon. Its just such a shame the grandchildren didn't have the opportunity to build the same relationship with dad that they had with mam, because I know from being a grandparent how important grandparents are for children; they missed out on knowing a great man.
18. I also have two adopted grandchildren that he would have loved. When they were first welcomed to the family we made them 'life books' with pictures of all the family in, but its just sad they never got to meet or know their great-grandpa.
19. I think dad's infection with Hepatitis B and his death really affected Ann the most. My sister Janet and I had been able to enjoy our teenage years, and we got up to all the things that 18 year olds do. Ann didn't have that – she had to grow up very fast after dad died, because she was living at home and both Janet and I had moved away and had children. It was very hard on Ann.
20. One year we decided to take Ann to France with us to go camping, because she was always working and looking after the house, mum and the dog. She came with us and had a whale of a time, but when she called home, all she got was an earful from mum because she hadn't left money for dog biscuits.
21. Ann had a completely different experience and upbringing to us. She had to be the surrogate dad and step into his shoes after he died of Hepatitis B. It really had a huge impact on her life because she could not go out and meet people – if she did she was mams plus one. If Ann

made any friends mam would get very possessive of her. All of this meant that Ann never had the chance to meet someone until much later in life. When Ann got married my mam was worried because she was alone and had relied so much on Ann for all of those years. So dad's infection and passing really stole an awful lot from Ann.

22. There were obvious financial implications with Ann having to move houses and take care of mum. She wasn't earning very much, and losing a source of income would have been hard. Dad had paid into a superannuation pension that mam got until she died. I think that was about £200 per month. After dad died, I don't think that mum went back to work. If she did, I am sure that she only went back for a very short time because she could not bare it.

23. As far as I can remember, I do not think that we encountered any stigma when we told people about dad's infection with Hepatitis B and his death. We talked quite openly about it, but we had no idea of the scale of the problem – we always talked about the infected blood he received like it was a one-off unfortunate thing that had only happened to our family.

24. My father was cremated in GRO-C, and I think this is what he had always wanted. I do not recall if there was anything unusual about the way he was handled after death because my mother took care of the funeral arrangements. I do remember that there was the option of going to see the body, but that my mother didn't want people to do this because she wanted people to remember how he had been when he was alive. However, I do specifically remember my mum asking me not to go to see him after he died, so I don't know if this was because she knew that he was being handled in an unusual way due to the infection.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

25. Please refer to my sister's statement (WITN3682001).

Section 7. Financial Assistance

26. We did not receive any financial support, nor were we ever told about any financial support. My sisters and myself had told mum that she should look into it because we felt like the doctors had lied to us in not telling us about the infection until right at the end. We said to mam that she needed to do something, that there must be something we could do, but she refused. Dad hadn't made a will so we had to go to probate.

Section 8. Other Issues

27. None of my sisters or I know if a post-mortem was carried out on dad. The fact that he was diagnosed GRO-C would suggest to me that it was a sudden death, and so surely a post-mortem ought to have been carried out.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

12.9.2019