

Witness Name: Ann Phillips
Statement No.: WITN3682001
Exhibit: nil
Dated: 11/09/2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANN PHILLIPS

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

I, Ann Phillips, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Ann Phillips. My date of birth is GRO-C 1957 and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am the youngest of the three girls. I was a twin, but my twin died at birth. I am a married housewife and I have a stepdaughter and a grandson.
3. 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, I will discuss the nature of his illness, and how his illness and death affected me.

4. The process of anonymity has been explained to me, and I have chosen not to remain anonymous.

Section 2. How Infected

5. My father's name was Eric Fletcher. Our parents would have been married for 25 years in [GRO-C]. He worked as a Transport Manager for North Yorkshire Fire Brigade. He worked in this position from 1953 to 1976. He originally started off as a mechanic in a mobile van, and he used to travel all around the different fire stations throughout Yorkshire.
6. At the time of my father's infection I lived at home with my mother and father in [GRO-C]. I was the only daughter living at home at this time because both of my sisters were married and had moved in with their husbands.
7. My father had type two diabetes and had been quite overweight at one point, however he had managed to lose all of the weight to be healthier. He also had a history of heart related problems, and there were a few times when he was found collapsed on the ground due to this: he was once found on the ground at the fire station, and another time I found him collapsed on the stairs at home. I believe that the doctors said it was angina.
8. On 24 February 1976, my father had heart surgery at Shotley Bridge Hospital in County Durham. The operation had been planned and booked in advance, and was not emergency surgery. He was in the theatre for over 8 hours. During this operation he had three of his heart valves repaired, using an artery from his leg. It was during this operation that he received a blood transfusion. I do not specifically remember seeing the blood being transfused, nor do I remember seeing any drip bags, but he never had any other major surgery or received any other transfusions. The only other minor operation we can remember dad having was for his sinuses years before, for which he

would not have needed a transfusion. Our father also did not have any tattoos or piercings.

9. I cannot remember how long he was in the hospital for, following the operation on his heart, but my sisters think that it was about 10 days and that he was released from hospital around the beginning of March. During a check up following this operation, a doctor told my dad that the operation had been a success but that he should take it easy for a while. After the operation, my dad was really looking forward to getting back to work.
10. In April 1976 we had gone away caravanning for the weekend over Easter. As soon as we arrived my dad took a bad turn and was really unwell, so we only stopped over for one night and came straight home the following day. When we got home, my mam tried to ring the doctor twice, and at the beginning the doctor wouldn't come out to see dad. When the doctors eventually did come out to see dad, he was rushed to Friarage Hospital.
11. While my father was in Friarage hospital it was clear that he was very unwell. His skin was yellow with jaundice, he wasn't eating and his stomach was very swollen.
12. On Wednesday GRO-C 1976, I went to see my dad after work. My mam was there too; she barely left his side the whole time he was in hospital. I remember mam and I being taken out of dad's room by a doctor. The doctor was a young woman, but I cannot remember what department she came from or her name. With tears in her eyes, the doctor told us that while dad's heart surgery had been a success, the blood he had been given during the operation was infected. She specifically told us that dad had Hepatitis B – this was the first and only time we had been told of the infection.

13. I remember asking her where we went from here, and she said that she was sorry but there was nowhere to go – there was nothing that they could do. While my father had been in the hospital he had not been able to sleep due to discomfort, so the doctor said that she would give him an injection to help him sleep. I was so upset to hear that they couldn't do anything more for him that mam took me out of the room.

14. My dad was given this injection at around 7.30pm on GRO-C GRO-C 1976. By the time I was able to go back into the room, Janet was leaving the hospital and I remember her saying that dad was making a terrible noise. We had no idea that this noise was the 'death rattle'. By 8pm, my dad was dead.

15. We were not told that dad had been given infected blood or that he had Hepatitis B until the night he died. When the doctor told us, we were not told about the risk of transmission, nor we were told that we should get ourselves tested. No information or advice was provided relating to Hepatitis B after or at the time of our dad's diagnosis. None of us were given any further information about the infection. However the doctor was not cold or uncompassionate – as I have said she had tears in her eyes when she told us.

16. Our dad's death certificate specifically states that his cause of death was Hepatitis B and congestive heart failure (my sister has given a copy of the death certificate to the inquiry, exhibit no WITN3524002).

17. I can't remember exactly how long dad was in Friarage Hospital for before he passed, but as he went in around Easter, it would probably have been around GRO-C or so. During this time he was having his bloods taken every day and the doctors always said that they were doing tests. Therefore I feel like they must have had these results or known that he had Hepatitis B earlier than when they told us.

Section 3. Other Infections

18. Aside from the Hepatitis B, I do not believe that my father was infected with any other infection through the blood transfusion he received.

Section 4. Consent

19. I believe that my father was tested without his knowledge or consent, and possibly for the purposes of research, because of how quickly it all happened. I don't believe that you can just say in one day or night that he has got Hepatitis B all of a sudden. They were taking bloods and doing tests for the whole time that he was in hospital, so what were they using this blood for if not to diagnose him?

Section 5. Impact

20. Between my father being admitted to Friarage Hospital and his death, he was on a saline drip because he couldn't eat. I remember that every time we visited him there would be a slice of toast by his bed because he couldn't eat it – he couldn't chew or swallow because his throat felt like it was closing up. Oh my, how we would try to get him to eat that piece of toast, but he just couldn't.

21. As far as I know, my father never knew that he had Hepatitis B because we were only told when he was dying.

GRO-C

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am just so angry and annoyed - it should never have happened because he had so much to live for. He was 48 years old when he died. It's just awful.

22. The same night after dad's death, my mam took me home and said she needed some time alone. She went off in the car for a while, and later she told me that she had just sat on a country lane in her car.

GRO-C

GRO-C

23. The night my dad died, a part of our mother died too. She changed so much after his death. Before he passed, she was so loving and the perfect mam. However she became a different person afterwards; she was very bitter. We still loved her dearly but she was a different person after his death.
24. My grandpa's health deteriorated after my dad's death and he passed away on the GRO-C 1976, just a few months after dad. The doctor said that he died of a broken heart. He could not cope with the sudden death of his son and just gave up.
25. After my father's death I lived at home with my mum and needed to step up and help my mum financially with the bills and the running of the household. I worked at GRO-C Department Store in GRO-C so I wasn't able to save, and we lived from week to week.
26. In the early 1980s, my mother and I moved to GRO- I just gave in my notice at work and we managed to get a council exchange with someone living in GRO-C. We didn't want to be in the same house in GRO-C anymore because of all the memories; we wanted to move away and try to start again. Mum was not working at this time, so within the first month of moving to GRO- I managed to get a job so that I could help mum. Even though we moved, we never forgot what happened to dad.
27. I lost my dad when I was 18 years old, so he never got to give me away when I got married like he had done for my sisters. I got married on GRO-C which is my dad's birthday. I made a point of choosing to get married on this day because I felt that he would be there in spirit, even though he wasn't physically there to walk me down the aisle.

28. I think of dad every day. He never got to see his grandchildren or great grandchildren. He was taken away from us at the age of 48, which is not right. I only have two photos of him. One is from Janet's son Mark's christening, and I keep this on my mantelpiece. I made copies of it and gave one to each of my sisters. The other photo is of him on the ferry when we went to Ireland. I can't see his face in the photo because the sun blurs it out, but I still carry it around with me in my purse. These are the only two photos I have of my dad – you would think that we would have had more.

29. My mam did get my dad's pension, but it was not much compared to having his wage coming in, so financially we found it really hard to get by day to day. My sisters helped out with food and that. They were really hard times. We lost my dad and any quality of life that we could have expected.

30. In 1991, when mum was 65 years old, she got [GRO-C] She had [GRO-C] and I had to look after her because she didn't have dad anymore and my sisters both had children and husbands. I was also working while caring for her. One night I found her [GRO-C]
[GRO-C]
[GRO-C] I rang Gail and Janet to tell them that mum wasn't going to make it and asked them to come to the hospital. Luckily, mam pulled through. I continued looking after her when she came home and had to take a lot of time off of work. Luckily my employers were really understanding, and when I asked them to count my days off as holiday they refused – they just told me to take the time I needed.

31. In 2012, my mum [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Unfortunately the surgery went wrong and she had to have another one. They gave her [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] so she ended up refusing any further treatment. She eventually

passed away later in 2012. My mother-in-law also died in GRO-C of this year, and it was around 14 weeks later that mam died.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. No treatment was offered when my dad was diagnosed with Hepatitis B, because the doctor just said there was nothing they could do.

33. I was never offered counselling or psychological support, and I never went to the doctor about depression or anything like that. It was a different time back then and you didn't talk about those things, you just got on with it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. No one mentioned financial assistance, nor have we ever received any payments, compensation or financial assistance. As a family we did try to get mam to look into things but she just did not want to.

Section 8. Other Issues

35. I have not engaged a solicitor on this matter at this time. There are no other issues I would like to discuss.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C_____

Dated 12.9.19.