

Witness Name: ALEXANDER CHAPLIN

Statement No: WITN5525001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: MARCH 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALEXANDER CHAPLIN

I, Alexander Chaplin, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My full name is Alexander Lawrence Chaplin. I was born on GRO-C 1963 and I live at GRO-C Scotland.
2. My mother, Anne Chaplin (born on GRO-C 1945), was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood transfused to her when she had one of two heart operations. She died on 19th October 2014, aged 69.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my mother's medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My mother (Mum) was given a blood transfusion at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary during a heart operation in or around 1986. The operation needed to be repeated just a few years later due to the condition/degeneration of the pig's valve used and mum had a second blood transfusion.
5. I do not know which one of the two blood transfusions was contaminated with HCV. Mum was not told that she had been infected with HCV until many (approximately 20) years later. She was very upset not to have been told sooner. I remember that she sought legal advice from a solicitor in Dundee and I know that she successfully claimed the stage 1 ex gratia payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. I do not think my mother was infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

7. My mother consented to life saving surgery, but she wasn't pre-warned of the risk of infection through the blood transfusions. The blood she was transfused with should have been safe. The information about the infection was then wrongly withheld from mum for years and years. Her own GP didn't say anything about it. She felt lied to.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

8. My mum had an active and very enjoyable life before being infected with HCV. She loved to shop and was never 'in'. She played bowls, she went to bingo and she had lots of friends.

9. After being infected, she had a very sick, poor quality of life and was always in hospital. We (my father, my two younger siblings and I) missed out on a wife and mother stolen from us, never again able to do anything normal families could do. The fact that the professionals failed to tell her about the diagnosis for a very long time adversely affected her ability to seek treatment and contributed to her becoming very sick and, ultimately, her death.
10. Mum developed a multitude of serious health conditions through the HCV infection to include psoriasis of the liver. She had problems with her stomach and was often sick. She had fluid retention causing swelling in her abdomen and legs. Mum's legs were blown up and nurses had to come in daily to change her dressings. She could barely walk and could only go out with us in the wheelchair we bought for her (the NHS/hospital one provided was clumsy and unwieldy).
11. As a family we all worked together to support mum and at times it was a strain on us. I have three children as does my younger brother and my younger sister. We all went in to see mum several times each week (and visited with her daily whenever in hospital). We were all very close and mum was able to have a really good relationship with all nine of her grandchildren. She was such a sick lady through being infected with HCV.
12. The deterioration in mum advanced so quickly. Mum was always the 'boss'. One day as we sat together in her kitchen, she said to me 'I am getting worse' and she went on to tell me that she had signed a 'do not resuscitate' form. It was very hard for me to hear and I said 'no mum' and tried to convince her otherwise. She said she didn't want to come back a vegetable and be a burden on us. It was a very upsetting and emotional conversation. She was such a strong woman and she was thinking of us. She wanted us to be OK and to get on with our lives. Ironically, our father had a stroke shortly after mum died. It was all so very hard on him too.
13. Being infected with HCV was such a difficult thing for mum to deal with. She was on so many different medications and it dragged her down mentally, but

she didn't like a fuss from us. She always greeted us with a cheery face. She was very upset not to have been told sooner that she had HCV and felt stigmatised at the start. At first, she hid away, thinking she was dirty and bad. After a while, she opened up and explained it to her friends. She was a very proud woman, but it was not for her to be judged. It is the Government and mum's doctors who should be judged. It was not her fault.

14. I have accepted that my mother is not here anymore, but I would never want this to happen again to anyone else. It is a shocking injustice that mum was robbed of her health and so many years of her life. The Government and the medical profession need to be held accountable for the actions that they have done and the lives they have ruined.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

15. We were never offered any counselling or support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

16. My mother received the Stage 1 ex gratia £20,000 payment from the Skipton Fund.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

17. I do not seek anonymity and understand that my Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Signed.....

Dated..... 19.03.2021