Witness Name: Loraine Bridgeman
Statement No.: WITN5576001
Exhibits: **WITN5576002**
Dated: 17/2/21

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LORAINE BRIDGEMAN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 10 February 2021.

I, Loraine Bridgeman will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Loraine Bridgeman. My date of birth is GRO-C 1961 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live in GRO-C and I work as senior earlier years practitioner. I have previously worked as a nursery nurse, working my way up to become manager and then area manager of a group of private nurseries. I am divorced with 2 grown up children, and I live alone.

2. I provide this statement with the assistance of my brother, James Colvin. James is retired and now lives with his wife in GRO-C having previously worked for 25 years in Australia and 5 years in the United States.

3. I intend to speak about my mother, Janetta Colvin, who was born on GRO-C GRO-C 1918 and passed away in 1990 due to health complications that arose as a result of becoming infected with Hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, how it led to her untimely death and the impact this had on our family. I produce a copy of her death certificate as **Exhibit WITN5576002**.

4. I can confirm that I am not legally represented and that the anonymity process has been explained to me and I am happy for my statement to be in the public domain, as is my brother. I have also been made aware of the right of reply concerning any criticisms I may make.

Section 2. How Affected

5. My mother had seven children and she was extremely dedicated to her role as a mother and then later, as a grandmother. She lived for her family. I was the youngest of her children who are Janetta Hardman, Andrena Kirkwood, James Colvin, John Colvin, Robert Colvin, Elizabeth Green and myself. We were always a very close-knit family and we all spent a lot of time with our Mum.

6. In around 1979, Mum went to Bruntsfield Hospital in Edinburgh (which closed down in 1989) for a pap smear. Following this pap smear, Mum was diagnosed with a cyst on her ovary, and was offered an appointment a few weeks later to have this removed.

7. The cyst removal operation was also done at Bruntsfield Hospital in Edinburgh. She had been told it would be an 'in and out' procedure, and she would not have stay in hospital overnight. My brother James recalls dropping Mum off at the hospital that morning and telling her he would be back to pick her up that evening.

8. When James went back to the hospital with my sister Janetta to pick up mum that evening, they were told Mum would not be able to go until the

next day. The doctor treating Mum, who's name we can't recall, explained to them that Mum had lost a lot of blood during the surgery and had become anaemic. As a result, she was to be transfused with 2 pints of blood and needed to stay in the hospital overnight in order that her condition could be monitored.

9. Mum was never told about any risks associated with the transfusion they gave her, and I don't think she even fully understood that she was given blood. This was Mum's first time in hospital as she had given birth to all her children at home and was a very healthy woman. This experience must have been quite scary and confusing for her, and I don't think she would have asked many questions about what was happening. You didn't then; if the doctor said it was necessary you took that as gospel and Mum was of the generation that would never question the decision of a doctor.

10. Mum was brought home from the hospital by James and Janetta the next day, and she seemed fine, in fact quite perky. I was about 16 years old at the time and still living at home, and I do not recall any follow-on issues right after this operation and the transfusion.

11. Mum was never one to complain about anything to do with her health, so even if something had been wrong, it is unlikely she would have mentioned it. She was a very quiet and private lady, so I always made sure to keep an eye on her, to see if I noticed anything different or change in her behaviour that might indicate there was anything wrong with her.

12. In around 1989, 10 years after this operation and blood transfusion, I noticed the yellowing of Mum's skin and eyes. By this stage I was married with 2 young children and no longer living at home, but I lived around the corner from Mum's and would visit her every day. I noticed this yellowing progressively get worse, and I encouraged her to visit her GP, as did my other siblings. For a long time, Mum continued to say she

was fine and did not need to see a doctor, but eventually, after about a month she bowed to family pressure and went to her GP.

13. Mum went to see Dr Smart at Bonnyrigg Health Centre about the yellowing of her skin and eyes. He was concerned about this, and referred her to the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh for testing and treatment. Initially, the hospital believed Mum had jaundice and treated her for this. However, her condition did not improve with the treatment they offered her.

14. Even with the treatment Mum was being given for the jaundice, her condition was worsening and her stomach started to become distended. Mum went back into hospital where they conducted a lot more tests, eventually concluding that she was infected with HCV. When Mum was first diagnosed I thought HCV might be the same as AIDS, but her doctor said it was a different infection. I was mortified as was mum. This was at a time when AIDS publicity was everywhere. It was frightening. How could my mother have contracted such an infection?

15. I went home and read up on HCV and learned it could be contracted through blood and blood products. At the time none of us made the connection with her earlier operation. None of us really knew what HCV was before Mum became infected, and the doctors did not explain things well. We were very much left to do our own research about it.

16. When Mum was diagnosed with HCV, the doctors asked us the usual questions about whether she drank alcohol or used intravenous drugs. There were a lot of questions about alcohol. Mum was an extremely clean-living woman and did not drink any alcohol and certainly would never have used intravenous drugs. She had no tattoos and had never been abroad. Mum was happily married and widowed on two occasions, and was never engaged in any high-risk behaviour for HCV. As mentioned she had never even been in a hospital prior to the operation in 1979, never mind receive a blood transfusion. She spent most of her

time at home with her children and grandchildren That was her life and she socialised only infrequently.

17. It was very difficult to understand how Mum had come become infected with HCV as there just seemed to be no risk factors that applied to her. I remembered an incident where we had been in my sister's car about to go somewhere and Mum was closing her front door when she accidentally caught her finger in the door and it bled profusely.

18. We helped Mum wrap up her finger, but I remember being surprised by how much it bled. That was the only incident that stood out to me and I wondered if it had some link to the HCV, but this was after her skin started yellowing and she would have already been infected with HCV by this stage. In addition, she had not had come into contact with any other blood or blood products, which later helped me eliminate this incident as potential risk.

19. It was only much later in around 2011 or so that my sister Janetta saw a program on television about infected blood and was able to link this to Mum's HCV infection. The infected blood they were talking about was within the timeframe that Mum had received a transfusion, and they discussed people becoming infected with HIV and HCV due to blood transfusions or the use of blood products.

20. As Mum had been given blood within this timeframe and had gone on to develop HCV with no other risk factors in her life, it became clear to us that Mum had been given blood infected with HCV, which subsequently led to her untimely death. It was too much of a coincidence for her have become infected in any other way.

Section 3. Other Infections

21. I do not know if Mum was infected with any other infections as a result of the transfusion she was given. I'm not sure if she was ever tested for HIV, but we were not informed about the outcome of an HIV test if so. I

do not believe there were any other illnesses she had that the HCV may have impacted on.

Section 4. Consent

22. I do not believe Mum was ever given an explanation with regards to what procedures she needed, or asked for her consent beforehand. When Mum was given the blood transfusion that led to her becoming infected with HCV, I do not even think she was fully aware of what was going on, and I doubt anyone went out of their way to explain things to her.

23. Mum was not asked for consent before being tested for HCV, and as far as I am aware, she was never asked for consent in relation to any testing or treatment provided to her after she was diagnosed. This is something she would definitely have shared with the family as she would have wanted to know our thoughts. I spent a lot of time with Mum at the hospital, and none of the doctors ever approached me or any of my siblings to get consent when Mum was no longer able make such decisions independently.

Section 5. Impact

24. Mum being diagnosed with HCV was a huge shock to us all. To us, her children she was everything and it was devastating. As I mentioned above, she had always been so fit and healthy and such a placid, clean-living lady that it was just something you would never expect to happen to someone like her.

25. She was someone who was very regimented in her routine, going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, and just lived a very ordinary, healthy lifestyle with her focus always being on her children and grandchildren. I remember Mum coming over to my house and helping me with my children, and it always seemed like she had far more

energy than me. She was just not the type of person who would usually be at risk for HCV.

26. By the time Mum had been diagnosed with HCV, she had been suffering from the yellowing of her skin for some time, and her overall condition had deteriorated significantly. She had started to look frail. After the doctors diagnosed her with HCV, she was more in hospital than out until her death in June 1990.

27. Before Mum's diagnosis with HCV, I had started to notice some mental symptoms she was suffering from including a difficulty concentrating and brain fog. It seemed like her mind was always wandering off. She also had trouble sleeping, which she had never had before. I believe she also had a rash at some stage, but she covered this up with long sleeves and was never one to complain. Looking back, these symptoms can all be attributed to the HCV.

28. After Mum had been in hospital for some time just after her HCV diagnosis, she was able to go home and Elizabeth kept Mum at her place for a few days. However, she became so unwell again that she needed to go back into hospital.

29. Within a few weeks, her condition had deteriorated significantly to the point where she was just semi-conscious. She had lost a lot of weight and was like a shadow lying in her hospital bed. It was horrible to witness her condition worsen so quickly and to see her go downhill literally in front of my eyes.

30. What made things even worse was that we were just not kept informed about Mum's condition, or why she was deteriorating so quickly. None of the doctors or consultants had even approached us to explain what they were doing to treat mum or ask us any questions. If we had felt involved with what was going on, it may have been easier to come to terms with what was happening.

31. One day I told a nurse on the ward that I wanted to speak to Mum's doctor. She seemed hesitant, but told me she would ask the doctor to come and speak to me when he was available. Mum's doctor at the Royal Infirmary, Dr Kumar, came to speak to me about half an hour later.

32. I asked Dr Kumar why mum's condition had deteriorated so quickly, and he said that Mum now had cirrhosis of the liver. There was no explanation given as to how this had happened, we were just told it was something that eventually occurs with HCV. It all seemed like a big mystery. I don't even know if they were aware of infected blood at the time, but we tried very hard to get answers and it was like there was a closed door between us and the medical staff treating her.

33. I have been asked if I was aware if mum had a liver biopsy in relation to her diagnosis of cirrhosis. It is not something that she ever mentioned to me nor to any of my brothers or sisters. Certainly, I nor any of the family were consulted on such a procedure or informed that one had taken place.

34. As we had been told the condition of Mum's liver was extremely poor, I asked Dr Kumar whether Mum could get a liver transplant. However, Dr Kumar said that Mum was too old for a transplant at just 71 years old, and that she would not get better. It felt like she was being resigned to death.

35. The experience of Mum's care and the lack of information we were given back then definitely has made me question doctors more with my own care. I have had breast cancer, and I always made sure I investigated things thoroughly so I knew what I was talking about when speaking to my doctor. It made me less trusting and accepting of what I was being told by my doctor.

36. Mum was kept on the liver ward during her time in hospital. My siblings and I used to go into hospital to visit mum every day. When mum was still awake and alert she used to love it when I used to bring my youngest

child to visit her who was just 2 years old at the time, and it would really brighten her day.

37. Most times I saw Mum she had soiled herself and I would clean her and change her. The nurses said that she soiled herself constantly, so I can't say that the nurses weren't doing their jobs properly, but we took care of Mum when we could.

38. Although the nurses knew we were taking care of Mum and dealing with her bodily fluids, we were never advised to take precautions like wearing gloves in order to prevent us becoming infected with HCV. We were just left to get on with it. I really don't think the hospital was even aware of how infectious Mum was, and she was never treated any differently to other patients or kept in an isolation ward.

39. GRO-C

GRO-C I have given blood on a number of occasions as has my brother James, so we would have been notified if we had been infected with HCV but what about the others? What about the potential risks to our children? We could have inadvertently passed anything on. GRO-C

40. Mum passed away in hospital at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh on 03/06/1990. Her causes of death were listed as hepatic failure, cirrhosis of the liver and chronic acute hepatitis. Although we had been told she had hepatitis C, the type of hepatitis she had was not included on her death certificate, and I don't know why this is. Mum's body was cremated as per her wishes and we were not told we needed to do this. I would have been able to view her body at the funeral parlour if I had chosen to do, but I did not wish to see her this way.

41. Mum's death was devastating for the whole family. We had always been an extremely close-knit family, and mum was the rock. We would always meet at Mum's on a Sunday, and not having her as the centre of the

family did affect the family for some time, and we became a bit disjointed. I think everyone was adjusting in their own private way to Mum not being around as she had always been the glue that kept us all together.

42. Everything had always revolved around Mum as my father had died when I was just 13 years old. Without her, we had to find our own way forward as a family, and luckily, we came back together and renewed our bond. We remain very close to this day.

43. Mum had 13 grandchildren when she died, and she absolutely loved when they used to come and spend time with her. I felt my own children were robbed of their grandparents and lost out on getting to know their heritage and roots, as they were so young when she died, and my father had died before they were born. Their father's parents lived in South Wales and they did not see them often, so Mum passing away before her time was a real loss for them. It was heart-breaking for me.

44. My youngest son who is 32 now lives in Australia and is about to become a father for the first time. He is desperate for me to spend time in Australia so I can get to know my grandchild, as he feels like he missed out on that relationship with his grandparents growing up. I would always speak to my children about Mum to keep her memory alive, so they know a lot about her, and wish they could have had more time with her to build their own memories.

45. I could not get over Mum's death and I did not know where to turn after it happened. I think this contributed to the breakdown of my marriage, which happened not long afterwards.

46. While Mum was unwell and after she died, I remember feeling uncomfortable explaining to people what had happened to her, as I thought they might think she was a drug user or alcoholic if I started mentioning HCV and cirrhosis of the liver. I would then feel guilty for feeling this way and trying to hide what happened, as Mum had been innocent in everything that happened to her and none of it was her fault.

47. I don't recall any stigma towards Mum due to the HCV. She only had a few close friends who would have known what was going on, and given that they knew the type of lifestyle she led, they would not have made any negative assumptions about why she had contracted HCV. She did not lose any friends as a result of the HCV diagnosis and her family all stood by her.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

48. I do not believe Mum was ever offered any treatment for the HCV or the cirrhosis. I don't even know if there was any. I remember her being on a drip while she was in hospital, but her doctor never told us what this was.

49. What upset me the most was that it felt like there was no communication or updates from the doctors about what the next steps were in Mum's care. We tried hard to ask the doctor and nurses treating Mum for specifics about what was going, but we just did not get anywhere. In the end we just accepted how Mum was being treated and did not question what the doctors were doing. To an extent that's just the way it was and you can only push so hard.

50. Mum was never offered any psychological support or counselling to help her cope with her diagnosis of HCV and her overall declining health. My siblings and I were also not offered any psychological support in helping cope with Mum's death.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

51. When Janette saw the program about infected blood causing HCV in 2011, she also learned about the Skipton Fund who were providing financial assistance to those infected and affected as a result of contaminated blood. We had a family meeting about this, and James made an application to the Skipton Fund in March 2011 on behalf of the

family. I remember that the Skipton Fund had been helpful in providing the information we needed to complete this application process.

52. In order to support this application to the Skipton Fund we tried to get copies of Mum's hospital records, but we hit a brick wall each time. The Bruntsfield Hospital where Mum had been given the blood transfusion had been closed for many years. We contacted Register House to see if they held still held her records from her time at Bruntsfield Hospital, but they did not have them.

53. The building Mum stayed in at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh is now a block of flats, and this made it more difficult to access these records. I wrote to the NHS Lothian Trust in order to request Mum's records, but in October 2011 I was told that they had been destroyed in accordance with their destruction policy.

54. We also tried to access Mum's GP records and James went to visit Dr Smart at his home to discuss this, as Dr Smart was very well known in the community and lived locally. Dr Smart said that Mum's GP records would have been destroyed 5 years after her death, in accordance with their destruction policy.

55. We received a rejection from the Skipton Fund in December 2011 and we decided to appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal, some of us siblings, myself and James included wrote personal letters about Mum's infection and subsequent death, and the impact this had on us. We also confirmed that Mum had the operation to remove the ovarian cyst in 1979. I have been asked where the date of 1973, that is mentioned in some of our correspondence in respect of mum's operation may have come from. I can only conclude that this was mistakenly mentioned as our family collective memory is the year of 1979 for the procedure.

56. I recall 2 of my older sisters asking Dr Smart about Mum becoming infected with HCV due to bad blood. Understandably, he said he could

not become involved in that kind of conversation and it wasn't in his remit, but they felt like he knew more than he was letting on and that he knew trouble was brewing. Although approaching Dr Smart to discuss this was probably not the best course of action, we had all gone through trauma as a result of Mum's infection and death, and just wanted answers.

57. The Skipton Fund rejected our appeal in December 2012. We kind of understood the Skipton Fund's rejection in a way because we could not provide any proof of Mum's transfusion. We only had our word, which we hoped people would believe. We had tried hard to get Mum's medical records but just could not do this due to circumstances outside of our control. Nonetheless, it is not a nice feeling to think that people disbelieve what you are telling them. This was never about money for us but simply to get some sort of acknowledgement that mum was given infected blood and that this contributed to her – much – too early death.

58. I have been asked about part of the reason for the Skipton rejection being that the Appeal Panel thought that the time period between Mum being diagnosed with HCV and her developing cirrhosis was too short. I can't really comment on that other than to say that surely everyone reacts differently to the infection and mum was in her later years so her body may have been less able to fight it.

Section 8. Other Issues

59. Mum's death had a massive impact on the entire family, and was very difficult to content with. As I've described above, the experiences we had during Mum's treatment and the lack of information and support we were offered was terrible. I'm glad that the NHS has improved since then because if the same thing happened now we could have hung them out to dry.

60. Mum received no warnings and no written information about the risks associated with infected blood. After she was diagnosed with HCV, we were not told about any precautions we should take in order to avoid cross contamination. I feel like at least now things are more transparent, or maybe I am just naïve. I hope the Inquiry will help find out what really happened, and help those who have suffered.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 17/2/21