

Witness Name: S L Croucher

Statement No: WITN1175001

Exhibits: 0

^{22nd}
Dated: January 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SAMUEL LESLIE CROUCHER

I, Samuel Leslie Croucher will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Samuel Leslie Croucher. I was born on GRO-C 1993 and live at GRO-C
GRO-C with my mother Kathryn Lee Croucher.
2. I make this statement as the son of Gary Leslie Croucher who was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated blood products and who died on 9 October 2010.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of full access to my late father's medical records.
4. My mother has also provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry dated 31st December 2018 (WITN1346001).

Section 2. How affected

5. My father had severe Haemophilia A with 0% clotting factor and was treated at St Mary's Hospital Portsmouth under Professor Green where he was treated with Factor VIII products made by BPL, Oxford FVIII Factorate, Kryobulin, Cutter and Travenol/Hyland/Hemfil.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. I refer to paragraphs 5 to 10 of my mother's statement dated 31st December which set out how my father was infected which I adopt and agree with completely.

Section 4. Consent

7. I refer to paragraphs 5 to 10 of my mother's statement dated 31st December which set out the issue of consent which I adopt and agree with completely.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

8. Whilst I was growing up my dad was my best friend, we did everything together; fishing, holidays and just spending time together. We did not do sports as I was aware from a very early age that my dad was unable to do certain things due to his Haemophilia. Although he was a severe haemophiliac he tried to lead as normal life as possible.
9. Both my mother and father tried to make my childhood as normal as they could, although some birthdays dad was in hospital, which ended up being like a second home for us all. Every couple of months, dad had to be taken to hospital and I was often pulled out of school as my dad had been rushed to hospital.
10. My parents kept from me the true facts of dad's condition until my middle teens, when he was rushed to hospital with a major varicose bleed and my

mother and I were pulled into a side room and the doctor said *"apart from the HIV and Hep C does Gary have any other problems"*. Up to this point I was unaware of his infections although I had my suspicions as I was always sent to my room when an ambulance was called. My dad had also discussed the Birchgrove Memorial tree, and showed me the DVD. He explained that a lot of haemophiliacs had been infected with contaminated blood, but never admitted that he was one of them, but I think I knew as he was very careful with his injection equipment.

11. I remember when I was about 13 years old my dad was bed bound in our front room for 3 months. I gave up my bed for him, and slept on a mattress which I never minded and this continued until my mother had had enough of **GRO-D** **GRO-D** treating my dad poorly and she took him to Oxford Hospital and refused to bring him back until they had helped.

12. In my teenage years, I became very anti-social as I was aware of the stigma relating to HIV. I did not want to discuss my father with any of my friends but they were always aware that something was wrong due to the amount of time I was at the hospital. I struggled maintaining friendships and making new friends and I also wanted to spend as much time with my dad as I could because I knew he was progressively getting worse.

13. In 2008 when my dad contracted pneumonia and initially went into liver failure I was aware this was unlike any other previous visits to the hospital. I spent a lot of time researching my dad's illnesses and became very aware that the chances of him getting and not rejecting the liver weren't as good as we would have liked.

14. This meant I tried to spend as much time with him as possible. For 18 months he did so well, I spent so much time fishing with him and talking to him about his daily visits to the gym, when I didn't go with him.

15. In September 2010 he was admitted to Southampton General with a major bleed which resulted in him being put into Intensive Care and on a ventilator.

He managed to start breathing again on his own but he didn't know me anymore. The infection had spread to his brain, and he was unaware of who we were or what was going on around him.

16. He was sent to Addenbrooks in Cambridge, where for the first five days my mum and I were not allowed to visit him as it upset him too much when he saw us. Eventually my mum got a phone call and we had to rush to Cambridge as his condition had become critical. We spent as much time as we could with him, but I found it very difficult because he didn't recognise me. This was my best friend, my dad and he couldn't tell who I was. All I could do was hold his hand and try and keep him calm. He went into a coma, and my mum and I were by his side as he passed away a week after his 42nd birthday. I was 17 years old.
17. My life after my father had passed away changed so much and I found functioning daily impossible. I tried to keep strong for my mum and help her as much as I could. She was unaware of how hard I was finding it to cope. I carried this on for a couple of years, but eventually had a mental breakdown. Before the breakdown I distanced myself from all of my family and friends, became very socially awkward, and suffered with constant depression and anxiety. But I hid it as I was ashamed of how I was feeling. I suppressed my feelings and never dealt with them.
18. When I reached my early twenties, before the breakdown, I found out from my mum that I was conceived through Artificial Donor Insemination (ADI). I found this so hard to deal as my dad never wanted me to know, as he didn't want me to see him differently. This would never have been the case but it was too late for me to tell him this.
19. After the breakdown I was off work for 18 months; struggling to cope. I was, on a few occasions, suicidal; I just wanted to be with my dad. As I was out of work I got into debt and my relationships broke down. I found getting up each day a struggle knowing that my dad would never be with me again. I

stopped caring and functioning in a normal way. I missed and continue to miss my dad every second of every day.

20. I wish that he was still with me and honestly believe that if he had never been given the contaminated blood he would be here and I would still have my rock with me.

21. I have spent the past 8 years bouncing around from one dead end job to another. At school I was put up in years, as I was top of my class in every subject and passed 2 GCSEs for each subject. I had the potential to be anything I wanted. I was at GRO-C College when dad passed away and although I completed my education I really didn't put the full effort into my exams.

22. I am now back living with my mum as my long term relationship has ended, and cannot afford to live on my own. I also feel with the Inquiry going on I need to support my mum, as the memories it has brought back is like reliving everything daily.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

23. As my mother recalls, my dad faced difficulty obtaining treatment for his Hepatitis C infection. I refer to paragraph 21 of my mother's witness statement which provides more detail.

24. I refer to paragraph 21 of my mother's witness statement in which provides more information in relation to psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. I refer to paragraphs 22 to 26 of my mother's witness statement which provides all the information in relation to financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. My dad always wanted answers and wanted to get justice for the way he and his fellow haemophiliacs were treated, and that is why I am now fighting – for him!

27. I feel without question that this situation has robbed me of a normal happy life, with my dad.

28. It is very hard for me to put down everything I feel or have been through.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

29. I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I am happy to give oral evidence if it is required.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed ..

GRO-C

Dated.....22/1/2019.....