

Witness Name: Phillip Edward Kerr

Statement No: WITN2766001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: April 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PHILLIP EDWARD KERR

I, Phillip Edward Kerr will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Phillip Edward Kerr. My date of birth is GRO-C 1979. I am single and reside at GRO-C I have two sisters, one older and one younger than me.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late father, Mr Neil John Henry Kerr, He was born on GRO-C 1957 and died on 14 March 2000. He was 42 at the date of death. I was 20 when my father passed away.
3. My father was infected with hepatitis C and HIV as a result of being treated with FVIII blood products that were contaminated. My father died due to the infections.
4. My parents married in 1977 shortly before my older sister was born.
5. I have five folders of medical records and two folders are pending. All these records were obtained from the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast (RVH). They

have not sent all the medical records in one go. This witness statement has therefore been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical records.

Section 2. How infected

Hemophilia

6. My father suffered from severe haemophilia A from birth. Haemophilia runs on my father's side

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Factor VIII

7. My father suffered from bleeds on average two or three times in a week and was treated with FVIII products. I remember as a child I spent a lot of time in the Haemophilia Centre and at the age of five, my father was put on home treatment. It was my mother who gave my father the injections.
8. I do not actually know when doctors at RVH first started to treat my father with Factor VIII blood products. I believe this was sometime during the 1970's and this continued in the 1980's. These doctors never told my parents about the risks associated with these products.
9. I remember going to Spain with my parents. My mother read an article in a Spanish newspaper which stated Factor VIII products were contaminated. This was at a time when my father was being treated but no doctors ever brought this to our attention.
10. I believe doctors at RVH knew or ought to have known that they were treating my father with FVIII blood products that were contaminated. This was the only hospital that treated him and I believe this hospital was responsible for causing the infections.

11. He was under the care of Dr Elizabeth Butler neé Mayne, consultant haematologist.

HIV

12. In 1986, my father received a letter from RVH advising him that he was infected with HIV. I do know that in this year my parents had a group meeting with the Haemophilic Society with all patients who were treated with FVIII products. In this meeting, attendees were informed that tests were being carried out

Hepatitis C

13. My mother informs me that she recalls receiving a letter from RVH advising my father of this. The hospital letter was received in about 1991 – 1993. Unfortunately, she is unable to recall the precise date of the letter but it did confirm that my father was infected in 1986 with hepatitis C. I do believe that in 1986, the doctors had not identified the virus as hepatitis C and this would explain why they left informing us in the early 1990.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. My father was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C. I do not believe he contracted any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

15. I believe doctors at RVH carried out tests for HIV in 1982. I believe this to be the case because in 1984, my father was informed of the tests that were done two previously.

16. In 1986, my father was told he was HIV positive. It follows, therefore, the doctors at RVH carried out these tests without his knowledge or consent.

17. My mother informs me that my father was treated with AZT drugs to treat the HIV when these became available. This was with his knowledge and consent.

18. I believe my father was tested for Hepatitis C without his knowledge and consent. I do not know whether the doctors treated him for this infection. If he was, this was without his knowledge or consent.

19. I do not think he was given any information of the time of the infection.

20. I do not know if my father was treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

On my father

21. I was about 5 or 6 years of age when my father was first diagnosed with the infections. At this age, I recall that my father used to frequently have mood swings. My mother informs me that his personality was affected because he was upset about being infected. Before he was infected, my father never drank as much, but on one or two occasions my father resorted to alcohol.

22. It was clear that the uncertainty was constantly on my father's mind. I say this because when I was about 7 years old, I found him crying on the stairs and he said, *"I want you all to take care of your mother because I may not have long to live."*

23. In 1995 my father was employed as a Clerical Officer in The Civil Service. At the time, he was suffering from HIV and Hepatitis C and the effect of these infections eventually resulted in him leaving work.

24. In 1998, my father was retired on medical grounds. At the time, he was only in his early thirties and he was devastated to be informed that he could no longer work. I was due to start secondary school and my mother was studying for a qualification at university to become a medical secretary. After

he left work, my father spent a lot of his time at home and this is what led to his mood swings.

25. My father used to be fairly active and had a good social life prior to discovering he was infected. After his forced retirement, he never really went out at all and spent much of his time at home.

26. As far as I am aware, no treatment was offered to my father. He required a liver transplant but the doctors advised my parents, the operation was too dangerous to carry out. I do not know why the doctors allowed for my father's condition to deteriorate. Perhaps, if they had not done so, they could have carried out a successful liver transplant with minimal complications. This may have saved his life.

27. My father had to have all dental treatment at RVH because of mouth ulcers and the risk of excessive bleeding. He was unable to have treatment at any local dentist.

Stigma

28. The family lived in constant fear because of the stigma attached to the infections, more so HIV and AIDS than hepatitis C. We feared that the family's reputation would be tarnished and this could lead to abuse or even attack. For this reason, my parents did not tell anyone that my father was infected with hepatitis C and HIV.

Impact on me

29. I do recall that AIDS was initially known as a gay man's disease and the media gave considerable negative coverage particularly because it could be transmitted from one person to another. People were generally aware of this and this made us become extra secretive. I know that if the children at school had found out, I would likely to have been bullied.

30. My parent's felt that people generally were not particularly understanding or sympathetic. I had a lot of time off school as my father was constantly ill. My schoolmates knew my father was terminally ill, but we had to pretend it was something else.

31. My parents had to write a letter to the school to explain why I was always absent and attempted to explain why my performance was being affected. I did not do well in my school exams and I left school with poor grades. I am confident that if I was not exposed to the stress of coping with the stress of my father's illness I would have performed much better than I did.

32. I currently work as a retail supervisor. This is not the job that I wanted to do. I consider that I had the aptitude to have gone into higher education to study towards becoming a veterinarian or a doctor. I was distracted because I found myself in waiting instead found myself accompanying my parents when attending hospital. I was unable to cope with my father's illness

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33. Only some members of our extended family knew about my father's infections. My parents told only their very close friends, in particular people my father had met through the Haemophilia society.

34. As a family, we struggled financially. My mother was trying to work overtime to make up for the loss of my father's income, but she would have to take a lot of time off to care for him. My father claimed Disability Living Allowance and other social benefits.

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35. My mother had to become the rock of the family. She had to be strong to care for my father and to keep the family together. She was under an enormous amount of pressure to deal with all aspects of our lives.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

36. I am unaware of whether counselling or psychological support was ever made available to my father, but I believe that more care and support could have been offered.

37. I do think that if the need for a transplant been identified sooner, he may have survived.

38. At the time my father was infected, there was very little help being offered to families for the psychological trauma they had to endure.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. I contacted the Haemophilia Society and they informed me of the availability of assistance

40. I am aware that in 1991 my father was awarded £70,000 from a class action for the HIV but I do not know which one.

41. In 2001, my mother was given £20,000 from the MacFarlane Trust and received a monthly payment of approximately £200 for one year after my father's death. She does not receive any further payments now.

Section 8. Other Issues

42. My father's death has never been about money. I just want justice. I want those responsible to held accountable for causing the death of my father.

43. My father's death has had a massive effect on our family. My mother has lost her partner and will now have suffer living without him. My parents were soulmates, and she never tried to move on with anybody else after his death and we lived our lives without the guidance of a father.

Anonymity

44. I do not want to remain anonymous.

45. I want to attend court to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Phillip Edward Kerr

Dated: April 2019