

Witness Name: Christopher Humphreys

Statement No: WITN5843001

Exhibits: Nil.

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER LEWIS HUMPHREYS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 09 September 2021.

I, Christopher Lewis Humphreys will say as follows;

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Christopher Lewis Humphreys. My date of birth is GRO-C1957. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am currently employed as a grounds manager of a stately home in Sudbury.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") after 1998, when I was diagnosed. In particular, the nature of how I had learnt about my infection, how my illness had affected me and our family thereafter, and the financial assistance I have received.

3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I do not wish to be anonymous as I wish for my story to be known in full.
4. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates
6. I have constructed this statement with access to some, but not all of my medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

7. In 1983, I was working in an office job, and in my spare time I played many sports and this is where I suffered a serious injury. At the time, I was playing football when I ruptured knee ligaments. Prior to this injury, I had a minor injury on my other knee and I was referred to a specialist. I was later referred to Dr Bedford at Bury St Edmunds Hospital, West Suffolk. I was subsequently offered a new type of surgery for this injury.
8. It was also during this operation that I had received a blood transfusion. I did not realise at the time that I needed a transfusion, but I knew that it was a long and serious operation and blood would be needed. Muscle was taken from my left quadriceps to make new knee ligaments. They were held in place with a bone graft and a screw, and I was in hospital for approximately two weeks. I believe I contracted HCV through this transfusion, although I did not become aware of my infection until much later.

9. After the surgery, the rehabilitation that followed was very long; I had lost all the muscle definition in my left leg. Once I completed the two years of rehab, I returned to playing sport. The muscle repair in my leg was absolutely fantastic and I believe now the procedure is quite commonplace.
10. In 1998, I moved to a different company to start a new job. During my time there, a new local blood bank popped up and I encouraged everyone at work to donate blood. Shortly after a group of us donated, and to my utter shock, I received a letter from Dr Elizabeth Caffrey informing me that there was a problem with my blood and I was asked to ring the hospital.
11. I was later referred to a specialist at Cambridge, Dr. Tracey Woodall. I waited a matter of days and I was informed that there were HCV antibodies detected in my blood. Naturally, the fact that there was no cure at the time added to the distress my family and I had suffered. A biopsy was undertaken on my liver to assess whether there were any signs of possible cirrhosis, luckily only minimal scarring was found. I was also fit and healthy, which may have led to only minimal scarring on my liver. I did not drink excessively and had never experimented with intravenous drug use.
12. Prior to my diagnosis, I did not suffer from any major symptoms that would lead me to believe that I had Hepatitis C. However, between 1994 and 1998, I was lethargic and had flu-like symptoms, but at the time, I simply put it down to a lack of sleep.
13. When I was referred to a specialist at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge, I was informed extensively about HCV and was given clear warnings about the risks of cross-contamination. The advice consisted of informing me and my family to take care when using razors, the risk of sexually transmitting HCV, and generally taking extra precautions when it came to others coming into contact with my blood. It was reiterated to me that there was no cure at the time and HCV was a chronic condition.

14. Telling my then wife was obviously very difficult for me and I did not tell my children until they were older. At the time, they were ten and 14 and are now very supportive. The diagnosis and the consequences that followed put my relationship with my wife under great strain. I will discuss this further in the Impact section.
15. At the time there was a great stigma associated with HCV as it was linked to AIDS within the wider community. I had kept my diagnosis a secret from others apart from my immediate family.
16. Despite the chronic nature of HCV, I attempted to get on with my life as much as possible. I undertook regular check-ups and was told to simply maintain a healthy lifestyle and have biopsies every five years to assess whether there was any deterioration in the state of my liver. During a biopsy, I gave a surgeon permission to take some further samples of my liver as I was told it would assist in research for a potential cure.
17. Around the time of the biopsy, I had regular blood tests undertaken at Bury Hospital. Those tests were meant to be sent to the GP at Addenbrookes Hospital in advance of my appointments, so that they would be ready for discussion when I attended
18. There were significant coordination problems with Addenbrookes and Berry Hospital. It appeared that Addenbrookes Hospital had lost my results. I tried to have a conversation with the staff, but it transpired that they couldn't find my results. I decided to seek the assistance of my daughter as she was working as GRO-C She knew that my results had been sent to Addenbrookes and it took one conversation with my daughter for them to suddenly find them. Despite the coordination issues, I generally was happy with the process and had a good standard of care.
19. I was not told about any of the risks involved in receiving a blood transfusion, however I do not believe that the NHS was at fault. I required a blood transfusion at the time and understood that the NHS was in a difficult position.

Section 3. Other Infections.

20. To the best of my knowledge, I do not believe that I was infected with any other infections, bar HCV. I had regular blood tests and screenings which did not show any worrying signs of any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

21. I believed that I had informed consent throughout my treatment, I was treated pretty well and I appreciated the NHS. I trust that I was not tested without my prior consent and believe that I had received a high standard of care overall.

Section 5. Impact.

Mental/Physical Impact

22. I was initially very shocked when I received my diagnosis. I was acutely aware of the possibility that I may die, even with the situation explained to me. I was worried about the possibility of cirrhosis hanging over me. However, as much as I possibly could, I tried to get on with my life and I was not angry with any doctors. I understood that HCV and AIDS were quite new diseases and screening wasn't possible at the time. I am quite pragmatic and I am assured that no one had acted deliberately.

23. I did feel quite fatigued, particularly playing sport and this occurred like a sudden draining of energy.

Treatment

24. In 2014, I was contacted by Tracey Woodall out of the blue and she had told me I was eligible for this treatment. The fact I could receive the treatment was amazing and I could not believe it. I felt that the treatment itself was accessible and I did not face any practical difficulties in obtaining it. It was a six month course of weekly self-administered injections and daily tablets. I was very grateful for the treatment as I thought that I would have to live with HCV for the rest of my life.
25. I then told my employers I had HCV and that the treatment would affect my work including fatigue and nausea. This impaired my hours during the Winter period; however, they were very understanding.
26. Every morning I felt sick, and I found the treatment quite difficult and taxing on my work. For example, I struggled to fully walk up a hill, only to make it half way before feeling exhausted and having to stop. This was a stark contrast to my capabilities before starting treatment. I was working by myself and each morning was especially tough as I felt sick and lethargic. I then finished the course of the treatment after six months. I suffered from significant stomach pains and bowel movements.
27. I had routine tests to determine my viral load. I went for a test in 2015 and all the results were satisfactory; this test confirmed that I had an undetectable viral load. I have not had a biopsy or a test for some time since my viral load was undetectable and may no longer require biopsies due to the fibrosis scan technology.
28. My employers understood and did not treat me differently for having HCV. In my previous office job I did not tell my employer, however I did tell one colleague and she was very understanding about it. In general, I believed people would not understand and she corroborated what I thought.

29. I found the stigma quite debilitating as HCV was associated with AIDS and therefore, I found it difficult to tell potential partners about my diagnosis. However, I found that my current wife was very understanding. It did have an impact on my personal life, and I found I had to slightly distance myself from my friends and teammates in the sporting world, as I was worried about getting injured or cut and infecting people. I did not tell anybody about this and had to be very careful.

30. My main concern was taking precautions in order to avoid infecting others and had to be very careful with cross contamination. I took additional precautions in both the home and in the dressing room, for example I made sure to use my own towels. However, the precautions I took did not stop me from playing rugby and enjoying things I was always passionate about.

31. When I was married, I explained the situation to my wife and believed it had affected her to an extent. My family were not offered to be tested and were not tested. GRO-C

GRO-C I realise now that there may have been a possibility that she was infected. Perhaps this should have been discussed with doctors. My children were very understanding and it did not have a significant effect on them. My daughter studied Biomedical Science and understood the disease better than myself!

32. If I hadn't donated my blood to the blood bank and made that gesture of goodwill, my condition would not have been found, nor diagnosed in time; it could have led to cirrhosis. I also remember when my colleagues went back to donate blood again and being unable to go as I was told I couldn't donate again – this was awkward and led me to lying to my colleagues as to the reason I couldn't donate again. I believe I said I was too busy at work.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

33. I was very supportive and understanding of the situation that the medical profession found itself in as a result of the scourge of HCV and AIDS. The only issue I had was the lack of coordination between Addenbrookes and Bury Hospital. If it wasn't for my daughter being able to find my medical sample records, it could have been a more serious issue.
34. I understood that the HCV and AIDS situation was quite novel and did not resent that there was a delay by the time I had received treatment. My dentist was very understanding and did not treat me any differently, yet they of course took an abundance of caution.
35. I do not remember being offered psychological help or counselling. I wasn't the sort of person to get down about it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. At some point, Dr Tracey Woodall informed me about the financial assistance schemes for those infected with HCV. I assumed that the only possible reason was that I had a blood transfusion in 1984.
37. I decided to apply and I received £10,000 from the Skipton Fund and was informed that I would receive more if I had cirrhosis of the liver.
38. I was not looking to get any financial support and had not heard about it before Tracey had mentioned it to me. The process of applying was relatively straightforward and I had to find certain bits of information myself. I knew that there was no guarantee or expectation and I was surprised when I received the funds.

39. I found the funds to be tremendously beneficial at the time. There was a significant financial impact of having the illness and being a single dad with two children. My son had moved in with me and my daughter was at university. The money had assisted greatly and helped me pay the bills and helped me buy a small computer with a printer for my son's school work.

40. I did not face any major obstacles to receiving the funds. I felt embarrassed to take financial assistance as I felt the NHS had done nothing wrong. There has been no contact from the Skipton Fund since and I do not believe I had to agree to any conditions to receive the funds.

Section 8. Other Issues

41. I do not believe there were any other issues and appreciated the NHS was in a difficult position, but from a wider perspective I feel for haemophiliacs and those less fortunate than myself.

42. I understood it would have been possible for the NHS to check my medical records and tell me to get tested as I had a transfusion during a period of time where there was a high risk of viral infection. However, I understood that this would have been a difficult undertaking for the NHS to do for everyone.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

30/1/2022