Witness Name: Gordon Jamieson Lusk
Statement No.: WITN0543001
Exhibits: WITN05430002
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GORDON JAMIESON LUSK

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 07 February 2019.

I, Gordon Jamieson Lusk, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is Gordon Jamieson Lusk. My date of birth is GRO-C 1939 and my address is known to the inquiry. I am married and have been a retired architect for 15 years. I intend to speak about my infection of Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of if my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my life.

2. I can confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me in writing my statement. The inquiry team has explained anonymity and I do not require any information to be kept private.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I was infected with HCV on 27 August 1974 at the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh by a transfusion I received during an operation for acute gangrenous appendicitis and a pelvic abscess.

4. I was transfused with 3 units of packed cells and whole blood components and have GP records that refer to correspondence from the hospital at the time of the operation. At the time of the operation no information or advice was provided to me at any time about being exposed to the risk of blood borne infections.

5. I did not know I was infected with HCV until the results of a blood donation I made in 1992. I found out that I had been infected when I received a letter from the consultant physician of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service on 6 July 1992. At this point, all blood donations were being tested for HCV in Scotland. My wife had been giving blood and I decided to come along to give blood for the first time in 1992. I had never given blood prior to this donation.

6. When I was diagnosed, only very vague information was provided about the infection. It was described in the above-mentioned letter as a mild infection of the liver that can occasionally cause jaundice. I was asked to provide a small blood sample to repeat the test. After this test I was informed that my liver function was normal. I was given no information to help me understand and manage the infection.

7. Given how downplayed the diagnosis was, I was reassured at the time, but with hindsight it was totally misleading. Perhaps this assurance that was given was due to lack of knowledge about the virus or perhaps it was intentionally played down to avoid alarm.

8. No information was given about the risks of spreading the infection. GRO-C

GRO-C

Section 3. Other Infections

9. I do not believe that I have received any infection other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

10. I had to have the surgery in 1974. It was imperative to my health and was carried out with my consent. However, I did not receive any warning, or information about the risk of any blood borne infections.

11. I have received treatment and supervision at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh since 2004. All care and treatment has been carried out with my consent and I was given adequate information by my physicians.

12. I have not been treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

13. Initial mental effects of my diagnosis focused on the progression of the infection, implications on my fitness to work, the repercussions on my family and of a shortened lifespan. Initially, the physical effects of the infection were not apparent to me. After diagnosis, my working and domestic life continued as normal.

14. Further medical complications resulting from the infection were Cirrhosis and Varices. I am tested for these at regular intervals at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh as an outpatient.

15. After notification in 1992 that my liver function test was normal, I was not contacted by, or received any advice from the medical authorities and they did not make any offer of treatment. I did not pursue the possibility of treatment, and it appeared that I had dropped out of the health authorities' radar altogether.

16. It was not until June 2004 after noticing an article in the press about HCV that I contacted my local doctor who referred me to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, who tested me again and treated me for HCV. It is inexplicable that the medical authorities, knowing that I was HCV positive in 1992 took no action until I initiated treatment 12 years later in 2004.

17. The first treatment I received for HCV consisted of a combination of self-injected Interferon and Ribavaron tablets. I was on this treatment for six months. I was continually taking tests for bloods and liver function. Unfortunately, this treatment did not clear the virus. At the end the hospital stated that the treatment was unsuccessful and they had nothing more to offer.

18. The second treatment was with Sofosbuvir and Ribavirin. I was on both for six weeks. The hospital reported blood test results were negative on 27 July 2015. I am now clear of HCV.

19. I provide a chronology of medical records based on my treatment and when I was infected as **Exhibit WITN05430002**.

20. The physical effects of Interferon and Ribavirin were initially flu like symptoms. I had a lowered blood cell count and I had less resistance to infections. I also had changes to my appetite and taste. The mental effects of the drugs consisted of anxiety and restlessness. This was quite disturbing, however fortunately it only lasted for 2-3 weeks. The Sofosbuvir treatment period was shorter and I was not aware of any side effects mentally or physically.

21. Due to my infected status, I would warn medical and dental staff of my infection to enable them to take necessary precautions. I was never denied treatment because of my infection.

22. My HCV infection had a minimal effect on my family and social life. In 2004, when I started to receive treatment in Edinburgh, I began making sensible precautions to avoid the risk of transmitting the virus to others and total abstinence from alcohol. My family and I felt no stigma or shame with my diagnosis of HCV knowing the circumstances in which I had been infected.

23. HCV did not have any effect on educational aspects of my life. I did not have to take up different work or give up any existing work because of HCV.

24. The impact on my being infected has been mainly on my wife, she had large concern about the initial diagnosis, the success or failure of clearing the infection and the on-going worry about the condition. I was also worried about the potential for secondary infection. I used to carry around an organ donor card, but since the diagnosis I will no longer be able to donate.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

25. I have not experienced difficulties or obstacles since 2004, when I started supervision and treatment at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

26. Counselling and psychological support has never been offered or made available to me.

27. The Inquiry have explained that the British Red Cross ("BRC") are providing a counselling service for individuals who have either been infected or affected by contaminated blood. I will consider whether to make contact with the BRC.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I have received financial assistance from the Skipton Fund; this was transferred to NHS National Services Scotland in April 2017.

29. I found out that financial assistance might be available to me in June 2004 from a newspaper article. From there I applied and I received a first stage lump sum payment of £20,000 on 7 October 2004 and a second stage of £50,000 on the 11 March 2015. I received regular quarterly payments from 24 March 2015 to 27 January 2017, which have accrued to a total of £40,000. Skipton stopped making the payments on 1 April 2017 and it transferred to National Services Scotland. To date, I've received quarterly payments of £6750 since 2015.

30. Skipton required a completed application form for the first stage payment with confirmation of medical details and from my doctor. The additional payment required an application form with medical details completed by my hospital physician to confirm evidence of Cirrhosis.

31. I received no information about financial assistance from the NHS. It was by pure chance that I found the newspaper article and followed it up. I experienced no difficulties applying to the Skipton Fund and later with NHS Scotland.

32. The only precondition imposed on making an application was medical information provided by my physician as above in paragraph 30.

33. I have no observations about the various trust funds my experience with Skipton was satisfactory. I have no comment about the amount of financial assistance received.

Section 8. Other Issues

34. When I was diagnosed in 1992, treatments or at the very least, some form of information should have been made available to me. If I had not volunteered to donate blood in 1992, I would not have known that I was HCV infected. The health authorities should have traced and tested anybody who had received blood as soon as HCV had been identified in infused blood.

35. I gave a verbal statement to the Penrose inquiry in Edinburgh.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 16/03/2019