

Witness Name: James Sanderson

Statement No; WITN6334001

Exhibits: **WITN6334002-6**

Dated: X 08-04-2022

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES SANDERSON**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 10 January 2022.

I, James Sanderson, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is James Sanderson. My date of birth is GRO-C 1944 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I worked as a steel erector for 16 years and then worked as a maintenance engineer. I officially retired at age 66, but I continued to occasionally fill in for colleagues until about 2 years ago, when this stopped due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am a widow following the death of my wife in 2003, and I live alone in London. I have a step-son who I see regularly.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it has had on my life.

3. I am not legally represented and I am happy for the Inquiry Team to support me in providing my statement.
4. I do not wish to seek anonymity in relation to my statement.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

5. On Christmas Eve in 1964, I was assaulted in London and suffered a nose bleed referred to in my notes as repeated epistaxis (**See Exhibit WITN6334002**). I was taken to St Georges in Tooting and was there for 2 or 3 nights whilst they tried to stop the bleeding by packing my nose. It must have subsided to an extent, possibly because of the swelling or the fact I was swallowing a lot of the blood as they let me go from the hospital. That may have been because I was pestering them as I had a ticket to go to Glasgow that week to see family. I should mention here that I did not receive any blood or blood products whilst in St Georges.
6. I travelled to Glasgow as planned with my nose still bleeding but when I got home the bleeding gradually became worse. I was swallowing a lot of blood and decided to see the family GP. I think it was the day before New Year's Eve and within an hour or so I was taken to the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow for treatment. It turned out that I had quite a severe injury. The bleeding just would not stop. My nasal cavities were packed with small bandages to try and curtail the flow of blood but nothing helped and from then on, starting on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December and for several days thereafter I had to have multiple blood and plasma transfusions. There was the constant worry that I may swallow or choke on the blood soaked packing such was the extent of it.
7. I recall blood going into my arm through a tube and coming out just as quickly from my nose, which shows how severe the nose bleed was. From my recollection I had around 8 pints of blood and 2 pints of plasma in total during that period. I remember that I knew the sister who treated me at the Victoria Infirmary, as she was a customer at the CO-OP where I worked in Glasgow at the time, so she looked after me very well. I also recall her saying that if the

packing didn't work, she didn't want to tell me what was next, which I took to mean something not very pleasant.

8. Eventually, the bleeding from my nose stopped but I was kept in hospital for quite some time before being transferred to the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow to continue my recovery. I developed quite a bad gum infection called Candida, and I was told that this could be linked to the blood transfusion I had received.
9. After this incident, I never really thought much about this blood transfusion. I had always been fit as a fiddle, and even now I am the same waist size and weight I was as a teenager. I have always been very fit and active, and never missed a day's work. I rarely visited the doctors and had no issues with my health, apart from an occasional football injury.
10. Sometime after my wife's death in 2003, I decided that I should try and visit a local dentist, as I had not been to one in 10 years. I called up a local dentist that I thought was just down my road, but when I went in for my appointment, they said I had actually booked with a different dental practice, which was by the railway station in Norbury.
11. I went to this dental practice and I was told by the dentist GRO-D that I required a few fillings. I recall that she asked me if I wanted a gold filling, which I was surprised about as it was NHS treatment that I was having, and I did not think I would be entitled to this.
12. Something did not seem right about her and her colleague GRO-D GRO-D, and at the time I recall thinking they seemed very business minded and not patient focused. On one occasion, I was left with my mouth wide open for quite some time while she went to do other things and she said something like, 'where was I', when she came back to finish off my treatment.

13. I saw this dentist twice in relation to my fillings and then I had my teeth cleaned by her colleague. As often happens following a dental appointment, I noticed blood as I rinsed my mouth but I did not think much about this at the time.
14. In around 2005, I went to see my former GP Dr Newatia at Norbury Health Centre, following an ankle injury from playing football. I had not been to the GP in 3 years and at this appointment, Dr Newatia said he wanted to do some general blood tests on me, to make sure everything looked as it should.
15. After these blood test results came back, Dr Newatia informed me that my liver enzyme levels were significantly elevated in comparison with my tests results from 3 years previously. He thought that I had been abusing alcohol after losing my wife in 2003, but this was not the case. I had always been quite a heavy beer drinker, but had never had an issue with my liver identified before this.
16. My GP referred me for an appointment with a Consultant Gastroenterologist Dr Al Zouabi at Mayday Hospital in Croydon, which I attended on 13 September 2005. He informed me that I had tested positive for HCV. I can't recall if he did further blood tests on the day that led to this diagnosis or if this was as a result of the tests carried out by Dr Newatia, who had then passed the information on. I was stunned by this – it was totally unexpected.
17. Dr Al Zouabi asked me if I had ever had a blood transfusion, and I explained to him that I had received a blood transfusion at the end of 1964/beginning of 1965. He said this was the likely route of the HCV, despite it being 41 years earlier. I couldn't believe it.
18. Coincidentally, the day after this appointment, I received a letter from Lambeth Primary Care Trust, saying that I should be tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and HCV as a result of being treated by an unlicensed dentist. This was a real shock after finding out about my infection with HCV just the day before.
19. I learned more about this dental practice in local papers over the next few days. It was the one I had been treated at. Although GRO-D was a dentist, GRO-D

**GRO-D** was not qualified or licensed to work as a dentist and he had performed my teeth cleaning **GRO-D** had allowed **GRO-D** to work at the clinic due to their personal relationship. **(See Exhibits WITN6334003 & WITN6334004)**

20. I believe I attended a subsequent blood test appointment on 21 September 2005 to be tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and HCV, as had been suggested in the letter I received. Subsequently, I received a letter dated 10 October 2005 with my test results. **(See Exhibit WITN6334005)** This letter said 'I am pleased to inform you that you are not infected with HIV or Hepatitis B. Your blood tests show that you are infected by Hepatitis C'.

21. I really did not like the wording of this letter and it made me quite annoyed. They acted as if I was receiving positive news when actually they were confirming my diagnosis with HCV, a serious infection. This letter also said 'it is not possible to identify when or where you were infected with hepatitis C'.

22. It is difficult to assess whether the source of my HCV was from the blood transfusion I received over 40 years before my diagnosis or whether it was linked to the dental treatment I received. My doctor seemed to believe it was through the blood transfusion, but I personally feel it could have been the dental treatment.

23. 3 years previously when the GP had checked my liver enzyme levels, they were normal, but after this dental treatment they seemed to deteriorate rapidly. I feel that due to my heavy drinking over the years, my liver would have been shot to pieces if I had been infected with HCV for this long too. This seems to point to the dental treatment being the source of infection.

24. I was married for 35 years and if I had HCV during all that time, I am positive my wife would have contracted it as she regularly used my shaving razor and comb. She was in and out of hospital with many complaints and had both minor and major operations over the years, but she was never diagnosed with HCV.

25. I will never be sure about the source of my HCV, but I know it could either be the blood transfusions I received or the dental treatment. Maybe it was in my system for all those years, but just passed under the radar of the doctors.
26. I have no other risk factors in my life for HCV as I never used intravenous drugs and I have never had tattoos or body piercings. At no stage have I had any other blood transfusions and I have never been medically treated overseas.
27. The thing that made me lean towards the dental treatment as a source is that I am aware of the possible symptoms of HCV, the tiredness, sleep and memory problems etc but I have never experienced anything of this nature and surely in the time that elapsed, it would have affected me in some adverse manner.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

28. As far as I am aware, I was not infected with any other infections as a result of the blood transfusions or the dental treatment I received. As mentioned above, I have been tested for HIV and Hepatitis B with negative results. I have not received any notification in respect of vCJD.

### **Section 4. Consent**

29. When I received the blood transfusions following the injury to my nose, I was not warned about any risks associated with blood transfusions and I don't recall being asked to consent to this. I urgently required the blood transfusions as I was losing so much blood through my nose and the doctors just proceeded to treat me.
30. When Dr Newatia took my blood at the surgery for testing, I gave my consent but I was not made aware that it was being tested specifically for HCV.
31. I consented to the dental treatment that I received, but of course I would not have consented to an unlicensed individual being involved in my care.

## **Section 5. Impact**

32. When I first found out about the HCV, I really did not know much about what it meant. The consultant I had seen at the Mayday Hospital had not given me any information about HCV, what it meant for my future or precautions that I should take to avoid infecting others. There was no literature available. Thankfully, I had never been a blood donor as I think my older brother had told me that once you've received a blood transfusion, you cannot donate blood so I had never tried.
33. I innocently told my work colleagues about my HCV diagnosis straight away, which started up a rumour that I had been keeping the company of prostitutes after losing my wife. The next day, they had to apologise when I showed them the letter from Lambeth Primary Care Trust, telling me that I received treatment from an unlicensed dentist. I recall that I later received another letter saying that the dentist had been struck off and could never practice in the London area again, and thinking to myself whether that meant they could practice just outside of London!
34. I was referred to Kings College Hospital in early 2006 in relation to my HCV diagnosis. At the initial appointment, I was given more detailed information about HCV for the first time and what it meant to be infected with it was explained to me. It was a relief to understand it a bit better.
35. I had a biopsy done at King's College Hospital not long after I started to be seen there, and my stepson picked me up from the hospital as I was told I needed someone to take me home. I was told that I had not developed cirrhosis yet, and thankfully, my liver looked good. I recall I also took part in a Fibro-scan trial at Kings' and when I had another Fibro-scan years later, they said that the Fibro-scans had improved a great deal from when I had taken part in the trial.
36. I was told that there was an HCV treatment available for me, but I would have to give up alcohol 3 months prior to starting this treatment and then I would not

be able to drink at all during the 48-week course of medication. I was monitored fairly regularly until the treatment started.

37. I was a bit upset about this as it is difficult to meet friends at the pub without having a drink, and it did affect my social life. Instead of going to the pub, I decided to join a creative writing class as an alternative escape and I met lots of people there, which helped me socially when I could not drink. I started to write poetry as a result of this course.

38. On 31 July 2006, I started a 48-week course of pegylated Interferon injections and Ribavirin tablets (**See Exhibit WITN6334006**). I was told that I would definitely feel tired and unwell while on this treatment. I had a wonderful nurse called Katherine Oakes looking after me and I would see her once a month when I would pick up my tablets from the hospital.

39. Although I cannot recall any serious side effects from this treatment, I did become tired and short of breath at times, but I did not miss a day's work despite this. I also suffered some insomnia and had mood swings and itchy skin on my arms, which I spoke to Katherine about.

40. I became quite emotional while on the treatment which continues on to this day. I could get tearful at the slightest thing. When I told my sister-in-law about this side effect, she just said it was down to old age but I seemed to become quite emotional overnight, which was not like me at all. Strangely, I also lost all the hair under my armpits, which has never grown back. Despite all the side effects, I continued to play football and go running during the period I was receiving treatment.

41. I seem to recall it was coming up to Christmas when I was told that the treatment wasn't working and was eventually stopped which was very disappointing. I was told that King's College Hospital would continue to monitor my liver every 6 months until another treatment became available that I could try.



42. When the treatment failed, I immediately wanted to go to the pub to drown my sorrows but I made the decision to lay off alcohol instead. I did so for around two and a half years after this. I had regular ultrasounds on my liver and as mentioned above, I also had further Fibro-scans which thankfully showed that I had not developed cirrhosis yet.
43. In February 2016, I was referred to the clinical trials team at King's College Hospital and they put me forward for a new HCV treatment, which started in May/June of 2016. This treatment consisted of a 12-week course of Sofosbuvir and Velpatasvir tablets. Thankfully, I had no side effects whatsoever on this treatment.
44. After 4 weeks on this course of treatment, my blood test results were showing that I was clear of HCV and that my HCV levels had dropped very quickly. Despite this, they wanted me to continue the treatment for 12 weeks to ensure it worked. I was delighted at the end of the treatment when I was told that it had been successful. A GP at my current doctor's surgery had once told me that they would not find a treatment for HCV in my lifetime, - which at the time was quite disheartening, so I was very glad that he was proved to be wrong.
45. Since clearing the HCV, I have had my liver checked on a number of occasions, but since the Covid-19 pandemic, I have not been asked to come in for any tests or scans. I assume this is because of the backlog in the system. The last time my liver was checked, there was still no sign of cirrhosis and my liver looked well. I do drink alcohol but I have had no issues since clearing the HCV.
46. Thankfully, I have suffered no loss of friendships related to my HCV. As I mentioned above, I did tell my work colleagues about my diagnosis straight away which did start some rumours, as I really did not know about the stigma associated with HCV. I was able to explain to them how I likely became infected with HCV, which helped dispel some of the rumours that had started. I think the consultant I saw could have provided me with more information about that aspect of HCV, as I was clueless as to what it was and what it meant.

47. My wife passed away in 2003, a few years before I learned about the HCV. The HCV diagnosis did stop me from looking for another partner, as I was concerned about passing on this infection to someone else. Now it is too late for me to find a new partner and I wonder if I would have been in a new relationship if I had not been infected with HCV.
48. My stepson has always been aware of what was happening in relation to my HCV diagnosis, and I have had no problems in my wider family due to what happened. I thought people around me would take a step back but they didn't. I am thankful that I have always had an active social life, which kept me going through difficult times.
49. I was treated for throat cancer a year ago at the Royal Marsden Hospital. I try not to be too bothered about these things, and just hope for the best. Friends would always say, 'you can fight this!', but I would say, 'no the Royal Marsden is fighting it'.
50. I was told that I might have to have 8 teeth removed and possibly my voice box taken out in order to treat my cancer, but thankfully this was not necessary and I am now clear of cancer. I am grateful for the care I received and have tremendous faith in the NHS despite my experiences with HCV.

## **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

51. As far as I am aware, I have always been offered HCV treatment as soon as it has become available. One of my friends who I played football with spent a lot of time on his computer and would look up information on HCV treatment and print it out for me. He would tell me to ask the doctors about various treatments that he felt should have been offered to me, but he did not know I had genotype 4, which apparently was the last one they found a cure for.
52. When my HCV care moved to King's College Hospital, I was given a lot of paraphernalia relating to HCV and I was also offered counselling. Although I had some mood swings while on the treatment, I did not have depression and

did not feel the need to seek any treatment or counselling for my mental health. There was no offer of counselling when I was first diagnosed at the Mayday Hospital.

53. My HCV specialist nurse Katherine was very good and supportive, and I felt like speaking to her was enough support for me. As she felt I was coping so well, she asked whether I would like to come in and speak to others going through the treatment or about to start treatment, but I didn't fancy it.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

54. After I learned about the unlicensed dentist who had treated me, I wanted to seek some legal advice in relation to suing the NHS. I felt that this treatment could be the source of my infection, and I wanted to take this further. A friend at work's brother was a solicitor, and he recommended that I speak to his friend Debra Blythe from Russell Cooke Solicitors, who was a solicitor in the clinical negligence field.

55. I went to speak to Debra in early 2006 and she made me feel very welcome, but she did say that she wouldn't advise me to pursue a case against the NHS or the individual dentists, as she said the dentists were made of straw and would likely do a runner back to Iran after their release. Instead, she pointed me towards the Skipton Fund and said that I may be able to obtain some financial support from them.

56. In March 2006, I applied to the Skipton Fund and it was a simple form to fill in. As far as I can remember, it only asked me whether I had HCV and whether I had received a blood transfusion prior to 1979, and I answered yes to both. However, I had no records of my blood transfusion to provide to the Skipton Fund as all my records in Scotland, I later found out, had been destroyed after 7 years. The Skipton Fund rejected my application on this basis.

57. This rejection from the Skipton Fund really got on my rag and I wanted to prove that I had received this blood transfusion. I put in a lot of effort to try and locate

these records, even once I had been told that they had been destroyed by the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow.

58. I was told that some medical files had been stored at Glasgow University and I even spoke to the top guy working there about my records. I remember saying to him that he must be able to search for the records on their computer system, and he just laughed and said there were just rows and rows of paper folders in front of him that had to be looked through manually. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful.

59. At this time, I also wanted to access my own GP records. My GP said that he would look through them with me on a Saturday morning, as I would find it difficult to read doctors handwriting and would not know what I was looking for. I told him that I was looking for records relating to the blood transfusion I received in 1964/1965. He told me that unfortunately there were no records relating to this.

60. Sometime later in early 2008, I decided to request copies of my GP records to look at them myself and I paid for these copies. When going through the records, I found a handwritten note from this hospital stay which discusses the epistaxis I suffered from. **(See Exhibit WITN6334002)**. I also managed to find 3 old letters I had kept from 1965 from friends and family (2 of whom are now deceased) asking me how I was following the blood transfusion I had received. I am grateful that I never throw away any letters!

61. It took me 2 years from the time of the Skipton Fund's rejection of my initial application, but I appealed the Fund's original decision in February 2008 with this additional evidence I had located. Following this appeal, I was successful and I received a cheque for £20,000 from the Skipton Fund. It was little compensation for the endless hospital visits and awful toll on my social life, but I was glad to have proved that I had in fact received these blood transfusions. I felt justified.

62. I can understand the Skipton Fund's reluctance to pay me any compensation, as I've heard the biggest percentage of HCV victims contract the virus from using dirty needles. However, I am glad I was able to provide proof of my situation in the end.

63. I have never received any additional financial support from the Skipton Fund or any other Funds. I have been made aware of the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBSS) and will be getting into contact with them in relation to this, as they have never contacted me. I am now aware that others who were infected with HCV receive ongoing support but this option has never been offered to or discussed with me.

Exhibit number	Description
WITN6334002	Handwritten medical notes that include repeated epistaxis as a diagnosis
WITN6334003	Newspaper article from the South London Press dated 01 January 2006 titled 'Jailed crooked dentist banned from her trade'.
WITN6334004	Newspaper article from the Advertiser dated 20 January 2006 titled 'women let unqualified asylum seeker treat 500 patients at dental clinic for 7 months - Dentist jailed for NHS fraud is struck off'.
WITN6334005	Letter dated 10 October 2005 from the Health Protection Agency to Mr James Sanderson
WITN6334006	Letter dated 02 August 2006 from Ms Katherine Oakes, viral hepatitis nurse at King's College Hospital to Dr Newatia, Norbury Health Centre.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

X  
GRO-C

Dated

X 08-04-2022