

Witness Name: KENNETH BELLINGHAM

Statement No: WITN6422001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: June 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KENNETH BELLINGHAM

I, Kenneth Bellingham, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Kenneth Bellingham. I was born on GRO-C 1981 and I live at GRO-C, Scotland GRO-C
2. My father, Charles Bellingham (born on GRO-C 1961), was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products. He died after having a gastrointestinal haemorrhage on 21st January 2006, aged 44.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's medical records.

4. My sister, Alexandra Robinson has also provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry (Witness Number WITN5270001).

Section 2. How Affected

5. My father had mild Haemophilia A. He was treated at the Haemophilia Centre at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary with Cryoprecipitate initially and then Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate.
6. I do not know when my father was told that he was infected with HCV as Alexandra and I were just children. I remember being young and of primary school age when I found out about it. He said that he had something in his blood and that we should keep away from him as we (Alexandra and I) could catch it from him/through his blood. He was angry about it and said that he had been given a 'life sentence'. He was understandably hugely deeply affected. He talked about it more and more over time. When I was in my teens, I learned that other haemophiliacs had also been infected with HIV in the exact same way that my father had been infected with HCV. He said that he had been treated as a guinea pig and he had no trust of doctors as a result.
7. I do not know what information or advice my father was initially given to help him understand and manage the infection. I remember that my father was specific in telling us to keep away if he cut himself and not to touch his wound. He would self-administer his FVIII treatment in front of us, but we knew to stay away from the needles, syringes and bucket.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. My father was later notified that he might also have been exposed to vCJD. I remember him referring to it as 'Mad Cow Disease' and he was, again, angry about it, particularly as you cannot get tested for it.

Section 4. Consent.

9. My father believed that he was used for the purposes of research. He always said that he was treated as a guinea pig. My father had a lot to contend with as his health deteriorated. He couldn't work and he often said that he felt useless. He grew angrier and angrier by what happened to him and suffered with depression. He knew he wouldn't have a long life and often said that he had a death sentence hanging over him.

Section 5. Impact

10. My father (Dad) had a multitude of health issues to contend with through being infected with HCV. He used to work as an HGV driver, and he was a hard worker. Not being able to work and provide for his family was a big factor for him. He was also into DIY and that too became more and more difficult for him. Dad would say 'I'm medically retired' and started to drink more (probably daily). He was deeply affected and said that he felt useless. Dad tried to get lesser paid work and would have taken any job he could find. He just wasn't able, particularly so when he went on to treatment in an attempt to clear the virus.
11. Dad had Interferon and Ribavirin treatment and it made his health worse. The side effects were horrific. It made him sick and he couldn't finish it. He was completely wiped out and his mood swings and temper outbursts were awful. He had no trust in his doctors to keep him on track and no belief in what he was taking. He did not again attempt clearing treatment until relatively shortly before his death and my sister played a huge part in persuading him to try it because he just didn't want to put himself through it again.
12. My mother, father and sister moved from Greenock to England when I was 18 years old (in or around 1999). I stayed behind with my Nana (my father's mother) as I was working.

13. My mother was very unwell with MS and as Dad was also very unwell, she wanted to be close to her own family in England. Dad's haemophilia care transferred to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle. He spent a lot of time in and out of hospital in the last four years of his life. I spent a lot of time travelling to and from Greenock to visit my parents in hospital (and they were often in different hospitals at the same time) and always came down on birthdays and special occasions. I noticed the deterioration in Dad's appearance more than Alexandra as she was with him all the time. I sometimes got a shock at how he looked. He was barely in his forties, but he looked like an old man. He was thin through being sick (whatever he tried to eat) and his body was aging. His legs and stomach were swollen. He was in constant pain with his legs and he really suffered. Dad wasn't physically able to look after my mother and couldn't care for her the way that she had formerly cared for him. That left him heartbroken. He was very distressed by it and it was a contributing factor to his depression.

14. Dad had liver cirrhosis and was on the transplant list. At one time he was considered to be too healthy to be prioritised and then he was too sick. He had internal bleeding and would violently vomit blood. Dad had chronic depression and was on medication for his mental health. His only concern was for Mum and she died 18 months before Dad.

15. Dad suffered with hepatic encephalopathy and that changed his personality. It made him cheeky and not the same person in the last few years of his life. He would say nasty things and would be upset when he was lucid again and realised what he had done.

16. I fell out with Dad before Christmas 2005 when he said he was going to go on holiday to Portugal for the New Year. Dad had had his second course of clearing

treatment. He had had a negative HCV test result and was due a second test to check that the virus was still undetectable. I did not want him to go because of his health. Dad's intention to go abroad really was a big thing to me and I was raging. I didn't think it would be safe for him. He died after several weeks in intensive care in Portugal with liver complications having suffered a gastrointestinal haemorrhage. My argument with Dad at that time is a tetchy and sensitive subject to me as I know he took our fall out hard. Even though we did make it up at Christmas, I carry a lot of guilt.

17. Dad never had the chance to get to know any of his four grandchildren or meet them. My sister and I have two each. Dad really wanted grandchildren. He would often ask me 'when am I going to get a grandchild?' Dad only ever met my partner (now my wife) on one occasion. I broke down when my first child (a son) was born 18 months after Dad's death. My son and daughter do not know their grandfather. They have only ever seen pictures of him. Dad is missing at all our special occasions. He wasn't here at our weddings and he wasn't here to walk his daughter, Alexandra, down the aisle on her wedding day and that was very hard for her.

18. I am profoundly affected. I have been left with a fear/phobia centred around death and dying and have anxiety attacks associated with it. I am on medication for the condition and was having counselling right up until the Covid lockdown (as sessions can now only take place by telephone and I am uncomfortable with that). My Dad died at such a young age. I am in my fortieth year and just four years younger than the age my Dad was at his death. I had a death related anxiety attack just last year resulting in me being unable to go to work for most of November. It is horrible thing to live with, not just for me but for my wife and children. I am unable to communicate and just want to shut myself away. The impact on my family is huge. My employment/livelihood is also jeopardised, and I am often compelled to return to work before I am ready or run out of sick pay and/or risk losing my job.

19. Dad felt and looked like an old man and was so very unwell. He suffered through something that was not his fault. Without being infected with HCV he would still be here. It shouldn't have happened. His death was preventable whereas Mum's death couldn't have been prevented. Something very unnatural was put into Dad's body in what we believe to be an intentional act. My father was robbed of his life.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

20. No-one in the family was ever offered any psychological support. I was able to access counselling through my GP but I had to seek help myself.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

21. Dad struggled financially from when we were young. I remember that Dad had to sign a waiver in order to receive the Skipton Fund payment not long before he passed away. He didn't think he would get anything else and he knew that he didn't have long left. Alexandra and I have had no financial support or any help, for example, with the cost of Dad's funeral.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

22. I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I am aware that this statement will be published and disclosed as a part of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....Kenneth Bellingham.....

Dated.....23/07/2021.....