

Witness Name: Billy Watson  
Statement No.: WITN6436001  
Exhibits: WITN6436002  
Dated: 28/11/2021

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BILLY WATSON**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 07 September 2021.

I, Billy Watson, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Billy Watson. My date of birth is [GRO-C] 1971 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am the son of William Parker Watson DOB [GRO-C] 1943. I intend to speak about my father, William. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.
2. My father was married to my Mother in October 1968. During their marriage they had two children: myself and my sister, Jane.
3. I work for an International Oil company which has a manufacturing plant in Arbroath. I am divorced and have two children – my son, [GRO-C] who is 17 and my daughter, [GRO-C] who is 15.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

4. I believe my father received infected blood for the first time in 1978 after an operation to correct a hernia. A year later he underwent another operation to remove his Ileum due to Crohn's disease and I believe he was given another transfusion. The first operation took place in Arbroath hospital and the second bigger operation took place in Ninewells Dundee hospital.
5. During the first operation he received two pints and during the second operation he received six pints of blood by way of blood transfusions. I am unsure, but I do not think he was warned of any risks from the transfusions.
6. My dad recovered from both operations and went on to lead a normal life until 2015 when he started feeling unwell and his body started to retain fluids. There could possibly have been symptoms but again without being able to ask him, he might have thought these were due to with Chron's.
7. Unbeknown to us at the time, the symptoms he was experiencing were due to a Hepatitis C infection caused by the blood transfusion. The symptoms progressed and he deteriorated, such that he was admitted to Ninewells hospital to have the fluids drained from his stomach area and underwent tests to find out the cause. I am unsure who treated him at Ninewells, and only know of a few doctors that looked after him and therefore, have not named clinicians consistently throughout my statement.
8. After a week he was diagnosed with Hep C with scarring on his liver. He was told by Professor Dillan at that point that he could be terminal, but the Hep C would be treated. My dad was under the care of Professor Dillan in Ninewells hospital and was enrolled into a program

for a new drug to treat Hep C. I cannot recall what the treatment was called. Within 12 weeks from starting the Hep C treatment he was successfully cured of the infection, just leaving the Cirrhosis to battle with.

9. Following on from this, my dad received regular check-ups every six months to see if the Cirrhosis was becoming worse. During this time my father led a normal life, other than the swelling due to fluid retention.

10. In November 2019, my mother had a GRO-C and by January 2020 was admitted to a nursing home. My dad looked after himself, but as the year progressed, he got more tired and his eyesight was failing. We were unsure if this was due to his Crohn's or the liver damage. My sister and I did what we could, but due to Covid we tried to protect him as much as possible.

11. He was very stubborn as he didn't like to trouble anybody. In April, we found him lying on the floor of his bedroom, unable to get up, as he had lost all of the strength in his body. My sister and I were contacting him daily but on this day he did not respond. He crawled on the floor and grabbed hold of the phone and pressed the redial button. When the other caller answered their call, he shouted for help. They got in contact with my sister and I, and we rushed across from work.

12. Once in the house we found him on the floor so an ambulance was called straight away. He went into hospital and was informed that he was unlikely to live more than two days, but after three weeks of suffering he died from end stage liver disease. This news came from a doctor in Arbroath Infirmary and was the main cause of death on his death certificate, as seen in the exhibited document [WITN6436002].

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

13. During the second operation he developed Septicaemia, so this extended his stay in hospital (Ninewells – Dundee) to three weeks with a further six months off work.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

14. My dad was treated with his full consent given. At the time he started the treatment the doctor explained in full what it would entail and the likely side effects, even those that would likely make him ill.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

15. My dad was upset when he was made aware of his illness, but he had a positive attitude to life and would not let that beat him. My mother supported him and there was no stigma attached to him having this condition.

16. In terms of further medical complications, my dad regularly had to have veins tied off in his gullet due to a condition caused by Hep C. His eyesight also started to fail in the later years of his condition and in March 2021, it got to the stage where he was going to be classed as blind. This really affected his mental wellbeing, as he struggled to accept the eventuality that he would lose his sight. He knew he was living on his own and that he would need to reach out for help but did not want to as he was a very independent man.

17. After being diagnosed, my dad's health was ok until about December 2020. He started to lose weight but again we put this down to living on his own and not being able to see my mum.

18. My dad had no obstacles in accessing and receiving any treatment that he needed. My dad just had regular check-ups on his liver but didn't require any forms of treatment.

19. My father's professional career was not impacted by having HCV as he was retired
20. With regard to his social life, having HCV had no major impact on him. He still went out and played bowls and went to his men's club
21. From a family point of view, it was heartbreaking to know that my mum didn't fully understand how ill my dad was and after 57 years of marriage, they could not be together in his last days.
22. My sister and I spent time with him everyday and on at least two occasions, we sat by his bedside as we were told that he could die at any time. Watching your dad suffer and deteriorate over a three-week period was very hard emotionally. Both my sister and I took time off work.

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

23. My father experienced no issues in accessing and receiving any treatment. There was always care and support provided by the Liver Clinic at Ninewells hospital.
24. I am unsure if my father was offered counselling after being diagnosed.
25. My dad's HCV was treated with a pill and it was a 12 -week course.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

26. My dad was made aware of the compensation scheme, the Skipton Fund, by Jan Tait who was the secretary of Professor Dillan of Ninewells hospital. At first, he was of the opinion that the staff of Ninewells saved his life by giving him the transfusion, but after

discussion he applied and successfully received stage one, two and three of the compensation offered.

27. Since my dad passed, my mum's nursing home payments have increased and she is now required to pay in full. As such, the compensation my dad received has been very helpful in supporting her financially.

#### **Section 8. Other Issues**

28. There are no other issues that I would like to address in this statement.

#### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

GRO-C

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2021