

Witness Name: Ryan John Berry

Statement No: WITN0737001

Dated: 19th March 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RYAN JOHN BERRY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 22nd February 2022. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Ryan John Berry, will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Ryan John Berry. My date of birth and my address is known to the Inquiry.

2. How Affected

1. In the late 1980s/ early 1990s, my late mother Hayley Bartlett was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. The Inquiry will be familiar with my late mother and she provided a statement to the Inquiry (WITN0938001). Sadly my mother passed away recently.
2. As a part of my mother's treatment, she received a blood transfusion. My mother became infected with hepatitis C.

3. My mother was a young adult at the time of her treatment. My grandparents were not provided with any information by medical professionals regarding my mother's health.
4. As a result of my mother's age and inexperience, my mother was scared and vulnerable at the time of her treatment for cancer and subsequent infection with hepatitis C.
5. Due to her emotional vulnerability, I do not believe that my mother fully understood her treatment.
6. I do not believe that my mother was fully informed of the risks of the treatment she was receiving. I would like to emphasise that as a vulnerable young adult, she was not capable of adequately understanding any information that she may have received regarding her treatment and the risks of infection associated with it.
7. My mother was informed of her hepatitis C infection alone. The medical staff communicated this information to my mother in an overly direct way. The style and approach of medical staff towards supporting my mother in light of these test results was not correct. I believe that this style of communication negatively affected my mother's mental health. Her support network of close family, particularly her parents (my grandparents) were not included in communications with medical professionals.
8. I did not receive any information regarding the risks of others being infected as a result of my mother's infection. To my knowledge, my mother did not receive any information either.

3. Other infections

1. To the best of my knowledge, my mother did not contract any other infections beside the hepatitis C.

4. Consent

1. I do not believe that my mother received adequate information regarding her treatment or the risks of infection associated with it.
2. My mother was young and vulnerable at the time of her diagnosis and treatment. Her support network was excluded from information regarding her medical treatment and life-changing information was conveyed to her at a very fast pace.
3. I would like to reiterate that even if such information had been explained fully, the approach of the medical staff in communicating with my mother precluded full understanding of her treatment.

5. Impact

1. My mother's infection with hepatitis C had a huge effect on her mental health. It affected her mindset and her wellbeing.
2. Every relationship my mother had changed. My mother split from her partner of 30 years. Her relationship with myself and my brother was also substantially affected.
3. My brother GRO-C and my grandparents were under significant pressure.
4. My mother was resentful towards what happened to her and could not let it go. She was unable to concentrate for long periods. The treatment my mother received for the hepatitis C infection (Interferon) was just as horrific as her cancer treatment. The need to frequently attend hospital and the continuous medical appointments negatively and substantially affected her mental health. My mother attended

appointments with a psychiatrist for between 12 and 24 months. These appointments were privately funded.

5. My mother's infection with hepatitis C also had physical effects. Her lifestyle changed dramatically. She felt anger towards her situation and this contributed towards a decline in her mental health as she increasingly became a recluse. She became very isolated and did not go out much to see her friends. She kept her health issues private and did not want her friends or extended family to know. Before her illness and infection, she was outgoing, extroverted, had friends and went horse-riding.

6. My mother turned to binge drinking and suffered from anxiety. I believe that her alcohol issues contributed to her death due to the effect of her drinking on her liver.

7. My mother's infection with hepatitis C

8. My brother argued frequently with my mother and was often sent home from school. GRO-C

GRO-C

There were arguments in the household every day.

9. My mother would seek out arguments with me, and on multiple occasions would argue with my father on the street. The argumentative nature that my mother developed had a massive impact on my mental health, GRO-C She did not emotionally function like she used to. GRO-C

GRO-C

10. I believe that my mother had good potential when she was younger and was intellectual. However, after her treatment, further education was no longer seen as an option for her and she was treated not as an intelligent person, but just as someone with hepatitis C and cancer.

11. I was constantly worried about my mother. I believe that I developed mild anxiety and depression during this period. My self-confidence was significantly affected and I would phone in sick to work. We lost the normal mother and son relationship, and many happy times were taken away from us. My mother's personality changed over time, becoming increasingly affected by negative thoughts.

12. Her behaviour put pressure on my grandparents. My grandmother turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism which I believe contributed to her death. My grandfather collapsed at the news that my mother had GRO-C and could not emotionally cope with this situation. My mother stayed with my grandparents for certain periods of time. As an intervention and attempt to help, my grandparents rented a flat for my mother for a period of six months.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

1. At and around the time of my mother's diagnosis and subsequent infection with hepatitis C, she was not offered any psychiatric support. She did undergo counselling funded by WIBSS (Welsh Infected Blood Support Scheme) during approximately the last five years. I believe that if my mother had received mental health support earlier, this would have had a positive impact on both her and our family's mental health. She needed this support after her infection but was not offered any. I believe that help came too late.

2. No member of my family, myself included, received an offer of counselling at or around the time of my mother's infection with hepatitis C. GRO-C I have recently been offered counselling by WIBSS.

7. Financial Assistance

1. Around 15 years ago my mother received a one-off payment.
2. Over the last five years, my mother received regular payments from Velindre and WIBSS.
3. My mother also received PIP payments (Personal Independence Payments).

8. Other issues

1. My mother's cancer diagnosis and infection with hepatitis C changed her life and the lives of my family members. She lost her partner over 30 years, she lost her job and her home. She lost her previous relationships with her children and her parents.
2. Her physical health, mental health, education, diet and job were all substantially affected. The dynamics of our family changed.
3. My mother had no social life and no groups of friends. My mother was in a permanent state of unhappiness.
4. I would like it to be noted that the process of the Inquiry negatively affected her mental health. Giving information and statements regarding the effects of her blood infection required her to trawl through details. The revisiting of such information by talking and thinking about it has had an impact on the deterioration of her mental health. This deterioration went on to affect myself and other close family members.
5. My mother's hepatitis C infection ruined her life and ripped our family apart.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed...

GRO-C

Dated...

19/3/22

