Witness Name: Pamela Angus
Statement No.: WITN0488001
Exhibits: WITN0488002
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAMELA ANGUS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 08 January 2019.

I, Pamela Angus, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Pamela Angus. My date of birth is GRO-C46 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired licensee having given up work in 1993. I am widowed, having lost my husband in September 2017. I live on my own and I have two daughters.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") due to receiving an infected blood transfusion: in particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my personal life.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with drafting my statement. My

daughter has also assisted me, as sometimes my memory is not very good with names and dates.

Section 2. How Infected

4. In 1978 I had a major operation due to a burst appendix. I remember that due to the pain I was literally on the floor in my home and I couldn't even get to the phone. My mum came over, saw what had happened, and called an ambulance straight away. I was taken to Dryburn Hospital for treatment.

5. When I arrived there I had to undergo an emergency surgery: the doctors found out that I had a baby in the fallopian tube and that I had an ectopic pregnancy. At that point I needed some blood transfusions: I am not sure how much blood I was given; it is difficult for me to remember precise details. I recall that I was in hospital for a week after my operation.

6. I returned home and life went back to normal more or less. After this episode, for years, I was unaware of any problem.

7. Prior to my appendix operation I had been healthy and I had had no issues. I have never received a blood transfusion before or after this. I had a serious hysterectomy operation in April 1990 but I didn't receive any blood.

8. After that I started to feel unwell. I am not sure of the exact date of when I started to feel ill but it was likely 1993, when my daughter was in her 20s. My main symptom was that all of a sudden I started to feel very tired.

9. I started going to the hospital for blood tests. I would have been referred for this by my GP but I do not recall when the referral was made or which doctor made the referral. I attended the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) for a ten year period and would often go with a neighbour. I had many blood tests but one test that was never done was the Hepatitis C test.

10. Alongside my blood tests I also had liver scans and biopsies. I cannot remember how many of these tests I had exactly but I remember having a lot of them.

11. It was because of my liver scans that doctors eventually diagnosed me as Hepatitis C positive. I do not remember when exactly I was tested but it would have been around 18 years ago when my granddaughter was born (Autumn 1999-early 2000). I remember that the tests have been done either at the Freeman Hospital or at the RVI

12. To the best of my knowledge I was tested for Hepatitis C only and not any other possible infections.

13. I do not remember the exact way in which I was informed that I was Hepatitis C positive but I recall that I was informed face to face by my GP.

14. The GP also told me that I had cirrhosis.

15. I can't remember exactly what I was told about Hepatitis C at this point. I knew it was from a "dirty person" or that the blood may have come from someone with HIV. I remember asking how I had caught the infection and I was told that it must have been from a blood transfusion that had been given to me before the blood was pure and tested.

16. I was obsessively careful about blood: the doctor made me aware that the virus could be passed on this way and it was worrying me a lot. I was obsessed with making sure family members did not use cups or plates that I had used.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. To the best of my knowledge, as a result of being given infected blood I was infected with Hepatitis C only.

Section 4. Consent

18. I don't know whether doctors were aware before I was told that infected blood had been given to me.

19. I am not sure whether I was ever tested without my knowledge or without adequate information beforehand. I think the doctors were generally alright in terms of giving me information. Dr Saxena explained a lot to me and a Margaret Hewitt, who was a nurse, was lovely to me and very helpful. She is a truly wonderful person. It was only after speaking to these two ladies that we started to understand the things that were going on.

Section 5. Impact

20. When I was told I had Hepatitis C I thought it was a death sentence and that this was it. My family thought I had AIDS and that I was going to die. I remember my daughter breaking down in the kitchen when she found out.

21. Professor Bassadeen was the doctor I first started seeing once I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C. I commenced treatment with Interferon and Ribavarin. To the best of my knowledge I started this treatment in 2001. The Interferon injections were administered at the clinic for me and the Ribavarin was taken at home in tablet form.

22. The treatment was supposed to be for a year but after 8 months I stopped it, as doctors concluded it was not working. My viral load was not reducing.

23. The treatment rendered me suicidal. I remember my husband taking me away for the weekend and all I did was sit in the corner of the room and cry. We didn't even stay the night in the end as I felt so poorly.

24. It was unbearable to live with and unbearable for my family. I knew I was unbearable but that was the only way I could deal with it. I had no control over myself, I was hysterical. This was all in front of my granddaughter

who visited frequently. It was horrific. My daughter used to hit me to give me a shock to help stop the hysterics. This was the only thing that could be done to settle me.

25. I was bipolar and had suicidal thoughts. It was so bad that this part of my life is very vague. I remember having hallucinations in bed. Spiders were crawling up the walls: it was horrible. Even once I stopped the medication, it took a year to get the medication out of my system and I was still unwell. I have never been the same since.

26. Between 2001 and 2015 I was not receiving any treatment from my Hepatitis C. I would go to hospital but to the best of my knowledge this was not to receive alternative treatment.

27. I started having regular blood tests for my alpha fetoprotein levels (a marker for Hepatitis C) in 2010 under a new Consultant Hepatologist, Dr Saxena (WITN0488002).

28. In 2015 Dr Saxena informed me about a new drug coming from America that worked. She told me that a few of her patients had been put on it and that it had worked for them. Dr Saxena applied for me to be put on this drug but funding was denied. I was never informed of the reason for this. Dr Saxena was mad when she found out and she appealed the decision. The appeal was won and I was put on the drug.

29. I took a 12 week course of Harvoni and Ribavirin, which began in GRO-C 2015. I had no side effects at all from the treatment and my viral load improved every week. As a result on the GRO-C 2015 (which was incidentally also my daughter's birthday) I was confirmed as cured.

30. Life has never been the same since I found out about my infection. My sexual relationship with my husband ended as soon as I was told I had Hepatitis C. This was my own choice as I didn't want to put my husband at risk.

31. After I was diagnosed, both my daughters were asked to have Hepatitis C tests. They were worried because both of them had kids to look after. Luckily, the both tested negative.

32. When I was working as a licensee I was the life and soul of the pub. However for the last ten years I have hardly left the house. I will go out once a week on a Friday only or to go to a hospital appointment. I have been ashamed of my infection for a long time.

33. I am unsure if this is related to my infection but I have developed bowel and urinary problems in the last three years. These problems have led to me being incontinent when out and about or to have a persistent urge to go to the toilet. On one occasion I was on the way home with a friend and had to ask them to stop the car as I was unable to wait any longer to go to the toilet. I ran across the road and asked to use a toilet in a garage. The lady in the garage was lovely and let me use her toilet; however I was unable to get to the toilet in time and messed on the floor. My sleep was also disturbed due to needing to get up a number of times to go to the loo.

34. I now have a catheter and a bag fitted and this has been life changing. I can now go out and about and complete a food shop without needing the toilet.

35. I would say that because we have a very close family after I had discovered I was infected I did not notice any significant impact on my relationship with my daughter.

36. I discussed my infection with other people outside of my immediate family. I experienced no problems when I told my friends, who have always been very supportive. I told my dentist about my infection and experienced no problems. I was never treated differently because I was Hepatitis C positive.

37. In terms of the financial impact on our family this was minimal. Although I never returned to work after giving it up, my husband had his own business doing steel fixing and building bridges and it was very successful.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

38. To the best of my knowledge I did not experienced neither obstacles nor any significant difficulties in accessing treatment.

39. I was never offered counselling but I don't think it would have helped me anyway. Nothing would have helped; the only thing that helped was when I got rid of the virus from my system. It's like when you have a lovely doll and you drop it: it is broken. Once I found out I have HCV I always felt the stigma.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. As soon as I was informed that I had Hepatitis C Dr Saxena applied to the Skipton Fund for me. She managed the entire thing for me and I wasn't informed of any problems in the application process. I might have had to sign a document but I cannot recall this.

41. My application for financial support was accepted in the early 2000s (I can't remember the exact date). When I had to deal with them, the people at the Skipton Fund were always very nice. There are no issues that I can recall.

42. I received one first stage payment of £20,000 and then I got a second stage payment of £25,000. However when I received the cheque for the second lump sum I discovered that the payment had been doubled and I received £50,000. I am sure of this. I also received monthly payments of £1200. This is now increased to £1500 per month.

Section 8. Other Issues

43. As a result of my infection I have not been involved with any court proceedings or campaigning.

44. I don't expect anything from the Inquiry; I just hope that I can help someone else by submitting this statement. I don't know if we could have been informed sooner of this disaster. Only the people involved will know that. It happened and that is it unfortunately.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 28 · 3 · 2019.