

Witness Name: Gareth Grimes

Statement No.: WITN0720001

Exhibits:

Dated: June 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GARETH GRIMES

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 6 December 2018.

I, Gareth Grimes, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is Gareth Grimes. My date of birth is GRO-C 1950 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am now retired, living nearby to my brother. I intend to speak about my father being infected via transfusion. 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.

Section 2. How Affected

2. My father, William Grimes (GRO-C1916), was receiving blood transfusions at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital as part of his treatment. I was never fully aware of my father's medical condition(s), but believe

he was receiving transfusions for leukaemia. It is likely he told me this at the time. My father would go to hospital once every two-three months for blood transfusions. This continued for 12-18 months. On visiting one day in the summer of 1985, my father was not well and of a sickly-yellow hue. He told me that a doctor had told him that he had been given 'dirty blood'. Not long after receiving the transfusion my father became ill; he never returned home after receiving this transfusion. I believe my father was too weak for further transfusions, but cannot be certain. Within a month of receiving the 'dirty blood' my father died.

3. I never met any medical staff whilst my father was alive. I have no knowledge of conversation between my father and medical staff other than what he stated to me about receiving 'dirty blood'.
4. I cannot confirm what infection my father had. I can remember it was around the time people were starting to recognise HIV, so it would have taken some time for the disease to be recognised. The infection was manifested by my father becoming weak, too weak for further transfusion for some time. My father simply stated to me that a doctor had told him that his condition was the result of 'dirty blood'.
5. After my father died, my brother and I went to the hospital and spoke to a doctor. I remember the doctor opening an envelope containing my father's death certificate. He read through the certificate which listed a number of things as the cause of death, including heart failure. I was in shock at the time, but I remember saying to the doctor, 'He went through a bad time after the blood transfusion.' I do not recall if the doctor made any comments.
6. Even though the transfusion was not the sole cause of my father's death, I do believe it shortened his life and made it much more difficult.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I am unable to comment.

Section 4. Consent

8. I do not believe my father was treated or tested without his knowledge or consent. It is unlikely he was treated without being given adequate information.

Section 5. Impact

9. When my father was at home after previous visits to hospital for transfusions his lifestyle was reasonable, although at times in great pain. He was still capable of driving. He never left hospital after the critical transfusion.
10. The infection made my father too weak for some time before transfusions resumed (if they ever did). He was mentally drained and frail. His skin was yellow, which normally indicates some sort of liver malfunction.
11. As mentioned previously, my father died within a month of receiving the transfusion. His wife (my mother) had died a few months earlier, and he had expressed to me earlier in the year that he did not have a strong desire to live, which was augmented by his being ill.
12. I am unable to comment on the treatment received for the infection.
13. There was no stigma associated with my father's illness because we were never made aware of any diagnoses.
14. It is difficult to comment on the impact on my brother, we all tend to be the stoical type.
15. My father was retired, and I would say he was not affected financially.

16. Prior to the critical transfusion, I went on sabbatical from my employment in New Zealand to attend Liverpool University to study a Diploma of Science (post graduate). During my studies, my mother died, my father was ill (receiving transfusions) and I became seriously ill, but I still managed my exams well. Upon completion of my exams, I moved in with my father. This was before he received the critical transfusion.
17. When my father became ill from the transfusion I had to write to my employer back in New Zealand to explain that I was looking for work in the UK. This was in case I had to look after my father. After my father died, I returned to my life in New Zealand. Luckily I did not lose my job in New Zealand.
18. It was a long time ago, but one's parents only die once. At the time I had to deal with all the unwanted emotions.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

19. I would doubt my father faced any difficulties in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected, but I have no knowledge.
20. The doctor I spoke to after my father died was a nice man. I have a vague memory of him saying that he could arrange for us to see somebody, but we would have declined it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

21. My father did not receive any financial assistance because he died in hospital not long after the transfusion.
22. I have not received any financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

23. At the time it happened I thought it was an anomaly, an unfortunate incident at the time. Accidents happen through use of needles or cross-contamination in the operating theatre - this was not like that. I believe the blood should have been screened and checked at the time; I am not sure how this happened.
24. I have given the best recollection possible; however, this statement is based on my memory 35 years later.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____ GRO-C _____

Dated 25/6/2019