

Witness Name: Lorraine West

Statement No.: WITN0972001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 9 July 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LORRAINE WEST**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 3 June 2019.

I, Lorraine West, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Lorraine West. My date of birth is GRO-C 1959 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I have three children and worked as a Physiotherapist before my retirement. I have since re-married, and I intend to speak about my late first husband David John Allender. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him/me, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.
2. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have a legal representative and that I am happy to provide the Inquiry team with a written statement.

#### **Section 2. How Affected**

3. David was born on GRO-C 1955 and died on 13 November 1985, at the age of 30. He was diagnosed with Hodgkins Disease in 1978 after we had been going out for around 7 months. He underwent successful treatment at the North

Middlesex Hospital; the disease couldn't be cured but he was in remission and they were holding it under control. David probably would also have had blood transfusions at the North Middlesex Hospital.

4. We married in 1980. We moved to Stansted Mountfitchet and David was transferred to the care of Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge. The treatment at Addenbrookes was different. He had to see the doctor every 6 months, and further chemo/radiotherapy and steroids were decided on to maintain the disease. They would take him in 2 to 3 days at a time. He did get weak and have anaemia, and whole blood transfusions were given to boost his ability to deal with the treatment.
5. No information or advice was provided to me or David beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection from the blood transfusion.
6. He remained well, working full-time with the General Post Office (now BT) and we GRO-C started our family.
7. Katie was born in GRO-C 1983. What happened afterwards becomes vague as I was busy with the baby, but in around 1984 we were told David had contracted Hepatitis C. No explanation was given as to why.
8. I remember the GP came around to our house (he lived nearby from us) with a letter from the Consultant that David had Hepatitis C. When he told us, I looked at him and asked how could David have got that? I didn't know anything about it at the time – I even asked if it was from water we had in Greece during a trip we took recently. The GP said nothing; I am not sure if he was waiting for us to ask anything, but we didn't ask any questions. Nothing was said about treatment for the Hepatitis. I do not recall the name of the Consultant nor do I have a copy of the letter sent to our GP.
9. I am not sure if David was told anything at the hospital or not, as I didn't go to see the Consultant with him because the baby was so small. At that time, we were more concerned about any change in the lymph nodes or prognosis for Hodgkins, so the Hepatitis wasn't anything else we deemed as more serious. I

thought it was just a virus and that it meant nothing. When you are going through things like that you don't want to ask any questions because you don't want to hear about it – it makes you feel safe.

10. I do remember our GP telling me to give David a low-fat diet as he was jaundiced, although I am not sure if that was before or after the Hepatitis C diagnosis. It was hard as there weren't many low-fat foods that David really liked, so I got told off for giving him his normal food.

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

11. Apart from Hepatitis C, David did not have any other infections from the blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

12. We were never told that David would be tested for Hepatitis C. I do not recall any other testing that was done without David's knowledge or consent, or without being given adequate information or for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact**

13. After David was told of his infection, mentally, we thought nothing of it and just got on with things. Things deteriorated within a few months; things changed because the treatment for Hodgkins didn't seem to be so aggressive anymore.

14. As for how the infection affected us – my world fell apart. My life stopped at 26. I took it one day at a time as I had 2 small children GRO-C. We didn't expect to lose David as he was doing well with the treatment available for the Hodgkins until the Hepatitis C. We were given no advice about the Hepatitis C.

15. There was no treatment given for the Hepatitis C. I can remember that when Hepatitis C was mentioned, they then stopped the more aggressive treatment

for the Hodgkins. He didn't go in anymore for his bouts of chemotherapy and blood, and wasn't given his normal attention. I don't know whether they thought that he was infectious to them, but they stopped everything.

16. We went ahead with a second baby but by the time Michael was born in 1985, David was growing weaker. By the time of the birth, David was skin and bones; he went downhill very rapidly. It was so quick, I kept thinking that he was going to get better. We were told that his liver wasn't coping and there was cancer there. In the last 18 months of his life, he got worse very quickly and died at home when Michael was 7 months old. In his death certificate, it says he died of liver metastasis, but whether it was metastasis or not I am not sure because he never had a biopsy.

17. To be honest, the whole thing was a blur. I only remember the Hepatitis C being a surprise to our GP and the Hodgkins treatment being discontinued. I am unable to tell you more, apart from the fact that David was doing well, we were told he had contracted Hepatitis C, and he died within a year or so.

18. We did not experience any stigma associated with David's diagnosis as everyone was more concerned about his health generally.

19. It was only in later times that I realised how Hepatitis C could affect the liver and what it can cause. Looking back, the Hepatitis C didn't help his situation, but even then, it hadn't occurred to me that it might possibly be linked to his death. After David passed away, I told people that he had Hepatitis C, something to do with his liver and he died. They were surprised and said you don't die from Hodgkins – that was when it clicked and I made a connection between Hepatitis C and the liver. No one told me it might be caused by blood transfusion; I never really thought about it until I saw it on the television. I woke up in the middle of the night thinking perhaps they gave him blood which was not as good as it should have been. I still don't 100% know because I don't have his medical records.

20. After David passed away, BT had a bit of money to pay off the mortgage and I had a pension. I sold the house eventually and moved in with my parents. I

am so grateful that my parents were there to look after my children while I looked for work; unfortunately, my mom died 4 years later. My plan to stop working until the children finished school couldn't continue. I got whatever job I could – I would get up at 4 am to work as a milk recorder on farms. It took me a while to get back into working as a physiotherapist for the NHS as I had to get qualified and have an HPC certification. I was doing little jobs for 3 to 4 years before moving back into my profession.

21. In 1991, I got married to my second husband.

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

22. As mentioned above, David did not have any treatment for his Hepatitis.

23. No counselling or psychological support was ever made available to me or David in consequence of what happened.

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

24. We had nothing at all from the Trusts and Funds because I did not even relate his death to blood transfusion at the time. I have also not applied to any of them since David passed away.

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

25. I want to be clear that we were so grateful to the medical profession for their work. I never questioned the medical profession and I am sure that the doctors did the best that they could at the time.

26. I am making this statement because I don't want David to be forgotten as he should have lived longer. It ought to be heard that these things can happen to people who don't have haemophilia.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed 

GRO-C

Dated 10/7/2019