

Witness Name: Brian Cox
Statement No.: WITN0939001
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 17th February 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRIAN FREDERICK COX

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 31st December 2020.

I, Brian Frederick Cox, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Brian Cox. My date of birth is GRO-C 1958 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live in Sussex with my partner, Adele, and I run a garden services company with my son Tarron.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV"). In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on my life.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I contracted HCV through a blood transfusion that I received in 1975 following a road traffic accident. I cannot remember the exact date of the accident but I remember that it was around four months after my 16th birthday. I was working as a petrol station attendant and lived in GRO-C Kent with my father at the time. On GRO-C 1974, I was given a moped for my 16th birthday. Around four months later, GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C I can't remember exactly what happened but I collided with a row of cars outside the hospital. An ambulance waiting outside rushed me to Accident and Emergency at Medway Hospital.

4. I suffered severe injuries to my left leg. I broke my tibia, fibula and several ribs on the left side of my body. I was told that as a result of the amount of blood that I lost during this accident, I was given five times my body's worth of blood in transfusions over a 30-hour period. I believe that this is when I contracted the HCV.
5. I was put into intensive care for a five or six day period, followed by eight weeks in the traction department. In total, I spent around nine weeks in hospital. To the best of my knowledge, apart from during the initial 30-hour period, I do not believe I was given any further blood transfusions.
6. After this accident I was on a crutches for around a year. I attended physiotherapy and had a year of electric shock therapy. Today, my left side is three inches shorter than my right side. This has twisted my back and I am currently struggling with the pain this causes.
7. I was not immediately diagnosed with the HCV but looking back if I had suffered symptoms, these would have been difficult to distinguish from the effects of the injuries and operations. However, sometime after I had come out of hospital,

GRO-C

GRO-C I was a bit of a silly young man and after the accident, I started drinking a lot and

GRO-C

GRO-C

8. Around six months after the accident, in 1975, I went to a venereal disease clinic on New Road in Chatham. The staff at the clinic said that they knew I had something and that there was a new strain of hepatitis but they were unsure what to call it. I don't think they used this name at that time but I

now know they were referring to non-a non-b hepatitis. This was when I first knew that I had some type of infection. I was told to always use condoms and to not share needles if I was using drugs. I don't remember being told anything else about the infection. I think I then forgot that I had an infection and began drinking heavily [GRO-C]

9. In 1979, I moved to [GRO-C] Cheshire to work in a chemical plant where I continued to work on and off for the next three years. I lived on an estate

[GRO-C]

10. In 1982, I moved to [GRO-C] to be near my mother and to try and clear myself of my drink [GRO-C] dependency. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

I was working as a labourer but I struggled to work many days because of my injuries. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

11. In 1986, I had a period of living on buses with New Age Travellers as part of the Peace Convoy but this was short-lived and in the late 1980s, I moved to London, living between [GRO-C] and [GRO-C] [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

I know that I am quite 'foggy' about what happened during this period and my infection was not at the forefront of my mind. However, I knew that I had this non-a non-b hepatitis and in 1990, after moving to [GRO-C], I presented myself at Brighton General Hospital and asked for treatment.

12. At the hospital, I was told that it wasn't worth me having any treatment because I was drinking too much [GRO-C]

GRO-C In other words, because of my lifestyle I was unfit for treatment. Looking back, this was probably the correct decision; I wouldn't have remembered to do everything that was required to go through the treatment.

13. On the third week of January 1991, I made the decision to give up everything; alcohol, **GRO-C** My son, Tarron, had recently been born and I needed to sober up. **GRO-C**

GRO-C I have been sober ever since, apart from one alcohol relapse, which began in 2007 after I was involved in a car crash. I severely injured myself in the crash and I became depressed at my situation and began drinking again. During this time, I took a holiday to Thailand and injured myself again after falling out of a tuk-tuk. I managed to get sober again in 2009 and have remained sober apart from one relapse when I was on holiday in India.

14. When my son, Tarron, was six years old, his mother sadly died of a **GRO-C** After that we moved to Sussex, where we still live now. I moved into the house I currently live in, around twenty years ago. I also had another child, my daughter, in 2002. In recent years, I started a garden service company with Tarron.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I have not contracted any further infections as a result of receiving contaminated blood. I have been tested for Hepatitis B and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) on several occasions and have been fortunate to avoid both of these infections.

Section 4. Consent

16. I do not believe I have been treated or tested without my consent. However, I was never told about the risk of infection associated with receiving a blood transfusion at that time. It could be said that I did not

consent to receiving the blood transfusions because I was not able to, but I would have consented because without the transfusions I would not have survived the road traffic accident.

Section 5. Impact

17. Until 1991, due to my lifestyle, it is difficult to say whether any effects I suffered from were because of the HCV. Referring only to the period when **GRO-C** until when I cleared the HCV, specifically 1991 to 2015, I can remember being constantly tired, especially towards the end. My daughter was born in 2002 and every time I had a day out with her or used a lot of energy during a day, I felt like I needed a few days rest. I feel that I didn't spend enough time with my children as a result of this lack of energy. It was like I only ever had 20% of the energy I should normally have had.

18. As well as making me constantly fatigued, the HCV also affected my ability to think. It makes you not have time to do anything properly, it forces you to cut corners and it becomes natural to no longer focus or to care less about things that you would ordinarily consider to be important. It causes you to make bad choices like not going to work. I would describe the way it makes me feel as constantly 'foggy'. I am also extremely forgetful and I attribute this to have having had HCV for so many years.

19. I began treatment for the HCV in late 2012 at Brighton General Hospital. My treatment was supervised by Dr Majella Keller, at the hepatology department. By this point the constant fatigue the HCV made me feel had become much worse. I felt a constant lack of energy and I could only stay awake for around five or six hours at a time. I would take my daughter for a day out and get back and feel completely exhausted. I knew then that I needed to get treatment.

GRO-C

GRO-C

20. I was given Pegylated Interferon through weekly injections in the stomach and Ribavirin tablets to take at the same time. The treatment took six months to complete and I attended Brighton General Hospital once a month for viral load tests. My viral load was gradually reducing and I was told that things were looking good so I began to get optimistic about clearing the infection.

21. Dr Keller GRO-C warned me about the side effects of the Interferon treatment and experiencing them was horrendous. I felt so much worse. It was like a constant heavy flu, I felt like I had no resistance to anything. Mentally, I couldn't think properly and everything became such an effort to process. Walking around felt like moving through thick porridge. I couldn't handle it so it made me depressed.

22. One month after completing the course of Interferon, I returned to Brighton General Hospital for a viral load test. Things still looked promising but I hadn't yet cleared the HCV. I didn't attend the following test five months later but after a year I received a letter from the hospital informing me that the treatment had been unsuccessful and I still had the HCV. Initially I was in denial but then it made me feel very depressed and negative about my situation.

23. Dr Keller called me in 2015 to tell me that there was a new treatment I could try called Eplusa. The treatment lasted three months; I had to take one tablet a day and have viral load tests once a month. Even after the first month of treatment, there was a clear change in my viral load. As I had previously been on Interferon, I was able to compare the impact of the two and the Eplusa was clearly working much faster and much more effectively. Furthermore, I felt great on the treatment because it seemed to give me so much energy. Six months after the end of the treatment I called the hospital and was told that I had finally cleared the HCV. I also went for blood tests a year later, which confirmed I had cleared the HCV and

showed that my liver is in such a good state that I won't need any further treatment.

24. I feel much better now that I have cleared the HCV in terms of how much energy I have and how alive I feel. However, I have since had further accidents, which have compromised my health and made it more difficult for me to appreciate the difference the treatment has made to my quality of life.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

25. I have previously explained the difficulties I faced when I first asked for treatment to clear the HCV in 1990. Looking back, because of my lifestyle at the time, I think the doctors were correct in their decision. Since I asked for treatment again in 2011, I have been supported well by Brighton General Hospital and I appreciate the help they have given me, particularly Dr Keller.

26. I do feel that other services have treated me differently as a result of my infection with the HCV. I was always treated badly by the dentist because of the HCV, he was rude and it was almost like he resented having to treat me. I was always made to wait for hours because I had to be the last one of the day. I can remember one occasion when I took Tarron with me to the dentist and the dentist said to him "have you got it as well?" This was completely unnecessary in my view. Even if he wanted to ask the question, that was not the way of doing it. Equally, the police have always treated me like a wild animal and I think this definitely had something to do with my infections.

27. I have been asked whether I have ever been offered any counselling or psychological support because of my infection with HCV and I have not.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I have never applied for any financial assistance. I was aware that some schemes existed to support people who were given HCV but someone told me that [GRO-C] I would not be able to get any such support. However, I have now decided that I will be applying for support from the English Infected Blood Support Scheme because the transfusion and infection that I received [GRO-C] [GRO-C] I have tried to obtain my medical records and have paid to do so, only to be told that all of my records have been destroyed.

29. I was previously receiving Personal Independence Payments but I was recently deemed to be no longer eligible. I am currently challenging this decision.

Section 8. Other Issues

30. I got in touch with the Inquiry because I want the Inquiry to make sure that this is not allowed to happen to any other people. The HCV slowed me down and had such a negative effect on my life that I wouldn't want anyone else to have to go through this. I want my son and his generation to have good lives and not have to worry about this happening to them.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

[GRO-C]

Dated

17/2/2020