Witness Name: Jennifer Craig
Statement No.: WITN0974001
Exhibits: **WITN0974002 - 7**
Dated: 10th December 2019.

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JENNIFER CRAIG

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 06 June 2019.

I, Jennifer Craig, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Jennifer Craig. My date of birth is GRO-C 1958 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired police officer, having worked for the Metropolitan Police for thirty-three years. I retired ten years ago and since then I have worked part time as a funeral service arranger and a script advisor for film and TV. I am married with one daughter, two stepchildren and six grandchildren. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

2. I confirm I am not legally represented and that I am not seeking anonymity.

3. I have signed a consent form for the use of my statement dated 19 July 2019 and I am happy for this to be used in conjunction with this statement once it is signed.

Section 2. How Infected

4. In GRO-C 1986 I gave birth to my daughter. I had experienced medical complications during the pregnancy, but because I was pregnant I could not undergo extensive scans and x-rays. I had a stag horn stone in my left kidney. When my daughter was six months old, the stone started to cause problems and I went to the old Orpington hospital.

5. At first, I don't think the medical staff treated me seriously because I was a busy mum and they just assumed my problems stemmed from that. However, the stone had torn my kidney and I underwent an operation to remove half of my kidney (a partial nephrectomy). Post-operatively I developed sepsis and I was kept in intensive care. I received several units of blood. I remember my mother saying she could see the colour was coming back to my face as I received the blood.

6. From my medical records for this admission which took place in September 1986 I can see that I received possibly two units of blood on the 11th probably during and after my operation. These were batch numbers 328487 and 990921. (See Exhibits WITN0974002A-D). Post-operatively I received a further three units of blood. They appear to be unit numbers 235205, 293387 and 329523. One unit was transfused on 17 September 1986 and two further units the following day. (See Exhibits WITN0974003A-C). This was later confirmed in a letter to my GP from the hospital (See Exhibit WITN0974004).

7. During the following year, there were some personal problems that resulted in the breakdown of my marriage. I felt tired all the time and had trouble sleeping, but I had a young baby who didn't sleep well and I was a working single mother so it was what you expected. In those times, there was not much support for single mothers and so I had to return to work. I was working in the police for the Met in the early child protection schemes; it was a tough job, harrowing with long hours.

8. Part of my kidney was left behind after the first operation, but in 1987 I built up further stones, causing me a lot of pain. I had to have the remainder of the kidney removed in a further operation. The operation was complicated and I was taken by ambulance the following day to the old Orpington hospital to the ICU. I had pneumonia, pleurisy, and a pulmonary embolism. I nearly died. However, with eternal thanks to the NHS staff, I survived. I received more blood during this recovery. I believe in total from 1986 to 1987 I had nine units of blood.

9. Once again from my medical records I can say that I was admitted to Orpington hospital on 19 October 1987. During that time, I had two units of blood transfused These were batch numbers 560124 and 590270. (See Exhibits WITN0974005A-D) Both were administered on 22 October 1987 and I was discharged the next day. A letter showing the results and confirming the transfusion was sent to my GP as before. (See Exhibit WITN0974006).

10. There was one further occasion when I underwent a blood transfusion and this was again at Orpington hospital as mentioned above. The blood transfusion was administered one unit at a time on both 17 and 18 December 1987. Batches 346837 and 635780 refer. (See Exhibit WITN0974007A-C)

11. I was advised not to have any more children, so I am grateful I had my daughter before my kidney issues.

12. I now believe one of the units of blood received infected me with Hepatitis C, though I cannot be sure which pack of blood was infected. As far as I can recall, at no point was I warned of potential infection risk from any of the transfusions, though there were at least nine opportunities to warn me.

13. Between 1987 and 2017, I remained healthy, with my remaining kidney being my only medical concern. I made the decision to give up alcohol in 1987 out of personal choice as, although I had not previously drunk much, I felt this was the best option to protect my kidney. I also ate healthily and exercised and I ensured, I drank a lot of water. I did not realise at the time how significant these life choices were for my future health.

14. I was tired and fatigued a lot of the time but thought this was normal for a busy, single mother. I was never one to go to my doctor and complain; I just got on with it because it was my normal. I would see my doctor for check ups for my remaining kidney and, other than a few UTI's and cysts, my remaining kidney has done very well.

15. I had been a blood donor before my issues with my kidney so I went to give blood again as soon as I was fully recovered. They asked me the usual questions and asked if I had received any blood transfusions. I said that I had and they said they could no longer accept my blood. I thought this was because I now had a mix of blood in my system, not because of any risk of infection.

16. In 2017, I developed a problem with my thumbs. They started to ache quite badly, enough for me to wake in the night due to the pain. Usually, I would not have bothered my doctor, but because it was waking me I went along to see my GP, Dr Chelvin of Highland Road Surgery in Bromley. He has been excellent and has agreed to

continue to look after me, even though I moved three years ago from his area. My GP said it had been a while since they had checked my kidney and so he referred me for an MRI. I thought this was unusual as I had not had a scan like that before. I had the MRI and thought nothing more of it.

17. In GRO-C 2017, my daughter had a baby and on GRO-C 2017 all the family were coming to see the new baby and to take photos at 1pm. I got a letter that morning from the Liver Clinic. I thought there had been a mistake as my only issue was with my kidney so I didn't know why the Liver Clinic were making an appointment with me. I called the number on the letter and spoke to about six different people. With the last person, I was told I had been made an appointment because I had cancer and there were several gastro-intestinal stromal tumours (GIST tumours) in my stomach and that the Liver Clinic would be treating me.

18. I put the phone down and shortly after my family arrived. I was dumbstruck, in shock if truth be known, as no one had told me the MRI had revealed GIST tumours. I went to King's College London Hospital to the Liver Clinic appointment the following week to have more tests. I consequently had an operation in September 2017 to remove the GIST tumours where I was cut open from my breastbone to below my hips. I had further blood transfusions during this operation. Fortunately, the operation cured the cancer without the need for chemotherapy. I healed well, but the scar gave me residual pain from the outset and continued to do so.

19. I heard on the radio that St Pancras Hospital was doing a trial for pain from scarring involving Botox treatment. I signed up and went along on three occasions where tests were performed. I remember a nurse took my blood and she wasn't wearing gloves and I commented on that because it was odd and I thought it was dangerous, even though I didn't know I was infected then.

20. On 4 February 2019, I was at work at the funeral home. I received a call from a female doctor on the trial. She asked if I was alone so I knew it was not good news. She also asked if I was on speaker phone and I said I was not. She asked me "do you know that you are positive for Hepatitis C?" I did not. I said I didn't know and she said I could not participate in the trial and she might have suggested I see my GP but I can't recall. There was no follow up from the trial doctors and no information was given to me about Hepatitis C or how to manage it. I didn't know what had happened or at that time have any idea how I had become infected.

21. I sat down on my chair at work in sheer disbelief and thought to myself that this could not be right; I did not use drugs, I did not have tattoos and I was not in any high-risk category. However, the bell on the door rang and a family came in to arrange a funeral so I had to put it to the back of my mind and go back to work. I certainly did not think this was an ideal way to be told such devastating news and it wasn't fair on me, but I could not turn away the grieving family.

22. I knew the infection was not a good thing and, of course, Dr Google did not help. I knew it was a life-altering diagnosis.

23. I had to initiate the follow up to my diagnosis myself. The first thing I did was tell my husband when I got home from work. My mind immediately went to the blood I had received when I had my operation to remove the GIST tumours. I had a GIST nurse so I telephoned her. She had been very unhelpful during my cancer treatment, but this time she was very helpful when I called. I thought they had given me some bad blood during this operation. However, she told me it was unlikely to be their blood. I wondered why tests had not shown the Hepatitis C then and she explained that they did not test for it unless the patient was in a high-risk category. She also explained the

operation is always performed in a way that prevents contamination and to ensure no infection was passed between patient and doctors.

24. My GIST nurse referred me to a Hepatitis nurse called Janet Catt at King's College London Hospital. We exchanged emails and there was a lot of trouble getting my blood tests done and getting the results. I eventually got to see the Hepatitis C nurse in clinic and was put on a course of treatment, but it was frustrating period prior to reaching that point. I never saw a consultant, only ever a Hepatitis nurse.

25. I was still not given any information on managing my illness or any information about Hepatitis C itself, including any precautions to take or how or why I had contracted it.

Section 3. Other Infections

26. As far as I know, I was only infected with Hepatitis C. I tested negative for HIV and I have not been warned about any potential exposure to VCJD. I do not know if there was any connection between my then undiagnosed HCV and the stomach (GIST tumours) cancer that I later suffered from in 2017.

Section 4. Consent

27. I did not know the trial doctors were testing me for Hepatitis C, though it may have been in the fine print. They also tested me for HIV and fortunately the result was negative.

28. Other than this, I believe I have consented to all treatment and I consented to the trial itself, but I do think more support and better management of the findings on their part would have been beneficial.

Section 5. Impact

29. I have been very fortunate that I have remained mostly asymptomatic all these years, though the Hepatitis C nurse confirmed my healthy lifestyle would have contributed to this. However, there have been minor symptoms that I did not know were signs of Hepatitis C until after my diagnosis.

30. I have struggled with tiredness and a poor sleeping pattern, but I attributed this to having a baby that didn't sleep well, though my sleep never returned to normal after that. I was a busy, working mum and for the most part a single parent so I just got on with things. I did find it frustrating when I was exhausted but still could not sleep. The last few nights I have found my sleep has improved and I am hopeful that this may continue and may be a result of the treatment I have just finished.

31. I have had very itchy skin, to the point where I would bleed and I would wake up in the morning to find blood on the sheets where I had scratched myself in my sleep. However, this was cyclical in nature and I didn't think I should bother my doctor with it. Looking back, perhaps I should have seen my GP, but I didn't consider it a serious illness.

32. I have had brittle nails that flake and break easily. I did not know that this was a sign of Hepatitis C, though. Fortunately, I have not experienced hair or drastic weight loss.

33. I have experienced aching and painful joints and this is what prompted me to see my GP when I was referred for the MRI. I find my hands and wrist joints are particularly bad, though I still did not think it was a cause for serious concern, just work and age related, albeit I have had the problem from a fairly young age.

34. My memory isn't great and this was difficult when I was working in the police. I put it down to just being tired and busy and just being me. It was like a brain fog - at times my thought patterns would freeze and I'd lose track of conversations. However, I now believe it might also be linked to the Hepatitis C.

35. Every other ailment seemed so insignificant in comparison to my kidney issues that I did not really follow them up.

36. Mentally, it has been hard to deal with. I don't think the way I discovered my infection was fair and I didn't have time to process it properly as I was at work. I also found it difficult when the Inquiry became so public as no one had informed me about the Inquiry and suddenly I was reading stories of people who had died from the illness I had only just found out that I had. I definitely felt mental anguish over this. I have also struggled mentally as, in my work, we have had training talking about HIV and Hepatitis C in relation to burials. I see the red marks on files for contaminated bodies and I wonder if one day that will be me.

37. Fortunately, my other treatment has not been impacted so far. I have not alerted my dentist yet, though now I worry that I should because I had extensive dental treatment done before my diagnosis. I don't think any medical professionals have treated me differently because of my infection.

38. Socially, I am not ashamed of my illness, though I do feel the need to qualify that I was infected through contaminated blood and not anything else. I deliberately told someone at work who I knew would spread it around as I wanted to make people aware and if it makes anyone think that they should be tested then that is a good thing. As my diagnosis is recent, I don't think the impact has been too great. There is still some stigma in my generation and so I think the initial

reaction is one of shock and concern that you are somehow "dirty", but I have not lost any friends over it. I don't doubt that people do talk behind my back, however.

39. I saw the stigma in the 1980s as GRO-C had HIV then. I know these are considered dirty diseases and I doubt anyone will be screaming their infected status from the rooftops, but it has got better for younger generations.

40. Fortunately, there was no impact on my education.

41. I did struggle to go to work sometimes, especially during my treatment, but I didn't let it beat me because I feel if I can go to work then I am okay. I think it is better to work if I can so I don't sit around feeling sorry for myself.

42. Financially, I don't think there has been much of an impact as I was only diagnosed this year and I am already clear of the virus, so I think I dodged a bullet in that respect.

43. My husband and I have been together now for twenty-five years. I did worry that he might have been GRO-C GRO-C. It has impacted us as a couple, especially our wedding anniversary this year as it was the day after I was told I had Hepatitis C. No one wants a Hepatitis C diagnosis for the anniversary! It was a worrying time for both of us up until I got my all clear. You can't plan. Your life is on hold and there's always that constant worry – for both of you - as to whether treatment will work

44. My daughter has just recently had another baby GRO-C GRO-C I am trying not to burden her with my issues. I don't worry too much about her being infected as she was born before the transfusions, but I still think it may be good for her to be tested.

45. My mother unfortunately passed away in September this year. I had kept my diagnosis from her as she was quite poorly. I kept the cancer diagnosis from her until after I was fine and she did tell me off and make me promise I would not lie again, but she was very ill and I just didn't want to worry her. GRO-C had HIV in the 1980s and I didn't want her to go through that fear again with me.

46. My grandchildren have also been affected. My granddaughter came to visit the other day and went to touch my tooth brush and I heard her dad say "no, no, no, don't touch that it's nanny's" and that does make you worry for them, but also makes you feel unclean and sorry that other people have to worry about these things, too.

47. I now live with the constant fear of what impact having been infected with HCV will have on my life in the future, and particularly on my physical - and mental health - going forward. It is all very well to say that the treatment has worked and you are clear. But are you? There is always the residual fear that the virus may return or indeed have already triggered an undetected potential future medical trauma and that is something that I have to live with for the rest of my life.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

48. I have undergone treatment for my Hepatitis C. I was prescribed Harvoni to take tablets once a day for eight weeks. I have now completed this treatment and I am waiting until September for final confirmation that it has been successful. On 29 May I had a blood test that showed that I am, most likely, clear of Hepatitis C.

49. The treatment made me feel generally fed up and morose. I felt mentally down, which is not like me at all. Although I have had

experiences in my life that could have made me depressed, I have never suffered from depression.

50. I had planned a trip with girlfriends to New York and this coincided with my treatment. I did not want to delay my treatment because I wanted to give it the best chance. I had to take the tablet at the same time every day so I had to work with the time difference whilst travelling. However, whilst away I became ill with a chest infection and felt so bad I stayed in bed for half the time we were in New York. I did not want this to ruin the trip for the other girls, but it did spoil it for me.

51. I still felt awful when I got back, so I went to a walk in clinic and got sent from there to Pembury Hospital. It turned out that I had very high blood pressure; so high, in fact, that they thought their machine had broken. I had never suffered from high blood pressure before; actually, in the past I usually had lower than average blood pressure.

52. Nothing Pembury did could bring my blood pressure down and I was prescribed some blood pressure tablets. I explained all this to my Hepatitis C nurse and she said it probably wasn't the treatment but she did inform the manufacturer about it. I think the medication did cause the blood pressure issues, though I suppose it could be partly finding out I had Hepatitis C and the mental strain of dealing with that. I have had no follow up on the blood pressure issues from the clinic.

53. I have never been offered psychological support or counselling in relation to my Hepatitis C, not even by the specialist nurses. Nor was I offered any support of this nature during my stomach cancer treatment.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

54. My Hepatitis nurse did tell me about the EIBSS and that I could receive financial support from them. I had to print the form myself and

complete it. I then gave it to my doctor to complete and paid £30 for the privilege. He filled it out incorrectly and didn't notice so it had to be done again.

55. I requested my medical notes to support my application and I had trouble doing this, too. I was told the records did not go back that far. I called the hospital again one day, very frustrated, and a different man answered. I explained everything to him in my frustration and said what a help it would be to find my records. He explained the system had a note saying that the records could not be found, but said to leave it with him and he would see what he could do. He called me the next day saying he had found my records and he sent them to me that week! What if I had not persevered? How many other people have been told the same and left it like that? Possibly it could cost them much needed funds.

56. It was hard reading the notes as there were traumatic memories of my stay with my kidney issues and also mentions of my brother and father who have both sadly passed away. However, it was a relief to know everything actually happened and it was not my mind playing tricks.

57. I eventually got the application in and I have had a letter confirming that I will receive a stage 1 payment and a monthly income. I have not been asked to sign an undertaking in relation to this money. However, I am very frustrated it has taken six months to get to this stage and I am still waiting for my first payment, despite being diagnosed in February 2019.

Section 8. Other Issues

58. I do not know how different my life would have been had I not been infected with Hepatitis C, but I am frustrated that it was not diagnosed for so long and that I still feel that I am in the dark about it generally.

No matter what happens with the Inquiry it won't change history, but we can hope this never happens again. I don't think a decision was made from ill will, but there should have been a better attempt to trace potentially infected persons and diagnose them sooner if required.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 10th December 2019