Witness Name: Jennifer Craig
Statement No.: WITN0974008
Exhibits: WITN0974009.
Dated: 2.8.22.

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF JENNFER 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. I have made a statement to the Inquiry under WTN0974001. I feel now that I did not sufficiently outline the impact that being infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) has had on myself and my family. I would now like to take the opportunity to expand on how I personally have been affected by what has taken place and the consequences that have arisen for my loved ones.

2. I am not sure who I am writing this to or even why. I think it is because I just want to make my voice heard, I want to feel that I am not a statistic, not a number but a person. I am 63 years old and at the moment I feel totally invisible.

Section 2: Impact

3. In 1987 I underwent an operation to remove a kidney. I was seriously ill in intensive care and was given several blood transfusions in order to save my life and for that I am eternally grateful. In September 2017 I had a major operation to remove GIST tumours from my stomach and liver.

4. As a consequence of this later procedure, in 2019 I volunteered for a medical trial that entailed some preliminary medical tests. These tests led to my diagnosis with Hepatitis C. I have since been treated with Harvoni and I am now clear of the infection but for me, the story is far from over.

5. Much of my story is contained in my original statement but at the time of making it I was still awaiting final confirmation that the treatment had been successful and to be truthful, possibly still in a state of shock. I remained at that time ignorant of the full ramifications the HCV could, and would have for myself and my loved ones.

6. I mentioned my GIST tumours above and they are a good point to start. My research into my HCV leads me to believe that the virus was responsible for my contracting that cancer. These rare tumours are hereditary, yet there is no history within my family, or caused through excessive alcohol intake - ironically, I have not touched alcohol since my kidney was removed in 1987 – or through infection with Hepatitis B or C. How is it that I was left to find this out? There are medical papers published that prove the fact. It begs the question as to why the Hospital did not test me for HCV when I had my cancer diagnosis? If

they had, I could have had treatment two years earlier than I did. Those two years may have made all the difference to me.

7. That operation to remove the cancer has had ongoing consequences for me. It was major surgery and I haemorrhaged and almost died. I again needed to have blood transfused but I was left with a 13" vertical scar from my chest to abdomen. I will now require further surgery as I have developed hernias where the wound was badly stitched up following the operation and to me this is yet another consequence of my infection with contaminated blood. The doctors won't say this is the case but I am sure of it and I wonder what else it has done to me over all those untreated years?

8. There are other physical difficulties that I put down to my HCV infection. I am constantly tired and have difficulty thinking straight as I don't sleep well, something that has come on over the past three years. I also have developed a contrasting feeling in my feet at night. Sometimes they seem numb but at others it is as if scalding hot water had been poured over them and to even put them on the floor is excruciating to start with. They feel bruised and as if my bones are crunching and I have to build up to putting one foot in front of the other.

9. At the time of making my original statement I had not been to see my dentist so did not think much of it. I have attended since and there has been no problem with receiving treatment although telling both my dentists was a huge embarrassment for me. However, it did eventually cause me look more closely at the root of the problem and I am now

aware that HCV can have a devastating effect on teeth. It relates to the reduced amount of saliva that can be secreted.

10. My dental history as an adult has been extensive and was so bad that when I retired from the police, I used £50,000 from my pension to have a total mouth reconstruction. It was only last year that I read about the effects of the disease on your teeth and it makes me so angry. The dentists could never understand why I kept having problems. Now we all know why.

11. The greatest fallout from contracting HCV and the one that hurts me the most has been on my relationships. Yes, my future health has been compromised and it has cost me a large sum of money but I can deal with those issues. What I find difficult to overcome is the impact on my relationships with those closest to me and the emotional turmoil that has entailed.

12. My relationship with my husband has been irrevocably damaged since I found out about my HCV, on my wedding anniversary of all days. I had to go home and tell him about it and the fact he could be infected. Can you imagine the shame I felt? GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C I just feel so unclean and spoiled – no, dirty is the right word and I can't go back to how I was before. I have changed as a person out of all recognition. I am now so angry but this is a problem as I have no one to be angry at so where does that anger go?

13. I harbour feelings of guilt and resentment about what the knowledge that I was infected with hepatitis did to my mum. The fact that it can come back at any time. The fact that I have been told that if left untreated in your body it can take 15 years off your life. It caused her so much worry right up until her recent passing. She should not have had to endure pain such as that in her later years.

14. Part of my application for financial help meant obtaining and going through my medical records. These including distressing mentions of the deaths of both my father and brother. These records took over 6 months to obtain and this led to a monetary penalty for me as I could only claim from when I submitted them. Negotiating the application minefield made me feel really isolated and alone and I dread to think how others less able coped with it.

15. Then there is my daughter, I have a constant worry about her future GRO-C GRO-C and has two young children with whom she needs help. I agonise over what will happen to her if I die early as a result of having this disease in my body undetected for so many years. I should be enjoying this part of my life with my grandchildren and husband but I am not. At times around the children, it is like walking on eggshells.

16. I have been open with friends about my condition and in the main they have been supportive. But I can still be blind-sided and hurt by questions and comments. A friend GRO-C sent me this after we planned a girl's weekend; "please remind which Hep you have. Apparently, I have to tell the GRO-C if I've been in 'close contact' as it could affect the next drug they are recommending." I was devastated. You don't expect to have such a negative impact on the lives of others, particularly friends.

17. Lately, I have had two ex-colleagues from the Police contact me after they had been told about my infection. I felt so humiliated by this. It is not nice to know that your illness is 'out there', the subject of discussion. It is something that I am still struggling to come to terms with. On a similar note, as part of my research I made contact with the Hepatitis Trust helpline and on their advice contacted previous sexual partners. Other than the feelings of degradation, humiliation and upset that I experienced – it was horrendous. This too has had catastrophic consequences – and continuous to do so to this day.

18. The call was emotionally wrenching enough to make but can you understand how someone will feel receiving a call out of the blue 30 years on about a potential life changing infection, and having the dilemma of what - and if to tell loved ones? It also caused further angst for my husband and I as I had to disclose relationship details that I had previously not mentioned. The stigma is everlasting.

19. I feel as if I have a ticking time bomb inside of me. Psychologically, I am scarred by the infection and its consequences. The past 12 months have been the worst. I have had counselling in that time but had to fight for help with that from the EIBSS. I can't seem to move on and spend my time researching Hepatitis and the Inquiry. The more I find out the deeper I sink. No one tells you anything. The Inquiry goes on and on and on. The longer it lasts, the less people there will be to compensate. Imagine feeling that way? Well, I do.

20. My exhaustion from the near constant pain and insomnia has taken a toll and I now find it difficult to face my current employment, a job I used to love. It involves dealing with the deceased in a client facing role. Sometimes the body bags have a red warning marker as contagious, including HCV and it's a constant reminder and I can't rise above it any longer.

21. I now find myself making excuses to avoid going in to work, including using my holiday allowance. The worry about whether I will be able to cope is constant and keeps me awake at night. Subconsciously, I associate my job with my diagnosis – I received it over the phone in the office on my own and had to immediately deal with a client without having any time to process this life changing information.

22. I was a strong independent woman who held down a hugely demanding job as a detective for many years working long hours and bringing up my daughter, running a home and caring for a family at the same time. Sure, I was always chronically tired but I just put it down to life. In actual fact I spent 35 years – the prime of my life suffering unknowingly because I had Hepatitis C.

23. The feeling of being completely alone makes me want to scream. There is no support nor has there been since the day I was diagnosed. I was on my own from the start. I cry every day. I am angry every day and I just want to be left alone in my house and to hide from the outside world. I don't know who I am anymore and I look at photographs from happier time and don't recognise myself seeing only the infectious me. I have really tried everything but I feel I can't cope anymore. I am on anti-depressants, something I never thought I would

need and whilst I would never consider harming myself as I could not do that to my children, I depend on them to help me cope at present with the turmoil in my life.

24. I just want people to know that I am here and to not feel invisible any longer. The impact of the HCV is so much greater than you could ever expect or be prepared for and I still wonder what it holds in store for me. I can't be the only person in this situation so what is being done for those suffering as I am?

25. I have attached a copy of a letter to my GP (See Exhibit WITN0974009). I sent this asking for help as I was not sure if I would get the chance face to face to say it all, or even whether I could. I have now seen my GP and it was a waste of time. He had not read the letter. I saw him for 10 minutes with both of us masked up and he stood over his desk looking down at me seated in front of him. I mentioned the letter and he did then read it but simply said "so you want a certificate?" He just was not listening and seemed disinterested and ended up referring me to a support group that when I research it, discovered it was a Drugs and Alcohol Support Group! I have neither of those problems. I was disgusted by the service I received.

26. The next step was to approach a private GP. She was really good and was shocked by what I had written in the letter. She went as far as apologising on behalf of the NHS for the way I had been treated. It was such a relief to have someone acknowledge what had gone on. I am now making progress.

27. This doctor believes that I may not have depression but in fact may have PTSD. I have forwarded my medical notes and await an appointment with a consultant. I am having to fund this myself but I don't care about the cost – it will be worth it if I can move forward and get my life and family back. That is now my biggest hope.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 2 August 2022