

Witness Name: Robert Brearley

Statement No.: WITN3550001

Exhibits: **WITN3550002**

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROBERT BREARLEY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 July 2019.

I, Robert Brearley, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Robert Brearley. My date of birth is GRO-C 1952 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a former plumber but I now deliver parcels, and I have three children.
2. I intend to speak about my late mother Margaret Brearley, born GRO-C 1922, who contracted the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV") as a result of receiving contaminated blood during an operation at Staffordshire General Hospital ("SGH"), which likely took place at the end of September 1989. In particular, I intend to speak about the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, and the impact it had on our family.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My mother was a keen ballroom dancer and she used to travel all over the country with my father to compete. Due to my father's job we moved frequently as a family, eventually my parents settled in Stafford, whilst my sister and I remained in GRO-C, Gloucestershire.
5. In 1989 my mother complained of a strange feeling down the front of her body, and visited the doctor, who told her that her arteries were blocked and she would have to undergo a major operation. She went into SGH straight away to have this operation, and my father and I waited 10 hours while she was in surgery. I believe this was in September 1989 as my sister was away on holiday at this time. During the course of the operation I believe my mother received a blood transfusion. She remained in hospital for a couple of weeks afterwards. Apart from the blocked arteries, my mother did not have any adverse health issues until after the operation.
6. I believe my mother consented to the operation at SGH beforehand, but as far as I am aware, she was not warned of the risk that she may receive contaminated blood by transfusion during the course of the operation. I do not know whose care she was under at the time.
7. A year or two after the operation my mother went back to the doctor due to concerns about bruising and sores on her body. I am not sure exactly what the doctor told her, but they questioned her about unprotected sex with other partners and asked if she had visited certain countries. I recall this line of questioning was particularly upsetting for my father. I believe this is when the doctors figured out she had contracted HCV by a contaminated transfusion, because from this point onwards, she would

be the last patient to be seen whenever she visited the doctor's surgery. My father was angry with the way the doctors treated her.

8. To the best of my knowledge, my mother was never told of her HCV diagnosis. I believe my sister and I would have been told if my parents had known about it, because we used to talk about everything. I think the doctors should have told her about her HCV diagnosis as soon as they knew. The first time I was made aware of it was on her death certificate.
9. After my mother's death, I remember a letter which was sent to my father by SGH. It said they were sorry for the passing of my mother, but that they could not be held responsible, as there was no screening of blood for HCV or other infections at the time she was transfused.
10. I do not think my mother was ever given any information or advice for managing her condition, nor any explanation for her symptoms. None of the family were warned about the possibility of transmission of HCV.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. To the best of my knowledge, my mother did not contract any other infection as a result of being given a blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

12. As far as I know, my mother consented to the operation at SGH beforehand. I am not aware of her subsequently undergoing any treatment or testing for HCV or any other condition. I am not aware of any testing undergone for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

13. After the operation and infection with HCV, my mother's life completely changed. Dancing had been everything to her, but she could no longer take part. She had to stop travelling around with my father, and she spent most of her time in the house. She was in and out of hospital multiple times during the last few years of her life. She would go in for a couple of days to a week at a time, she used to say "here we go again".
14. The main physical effect I remember were the bruises which would fester and turn into sores on her body. As far as I know, my mother was never told why she kept being so unwell. I know that she was given some sort of medication after her operation but I am not sure what it was. I do remember her saying she felt dirty because the doctors would always see her last, no matter what time she got to the surgery.
15. My mother and father stopped being able to visit us in GRO-C at the weekends. They used to come every week or two to see the grandchildren, but it stopped after she got ill, she was not up to it anymore. We used to travel up to Stafford to see them instead.
16. I remember when I got married in August 1996, it was touch and go whether my mother was going to make it to the wedding. She came to the wedding but she was not in good health, she had to stay sitting in her chair all day. In the past she would have been up dancing with my father.
17. The last time she went into hospital, in July 1997, she thought she would be back out again soon. She didn't know the severity of her condition. She was in for nearly a couple of weeks before she died. We used to go and visit her, but after the first few days she could no longer speak. From her medical notes we could tell that her organs were shutting down and her kidneys were failing. My sister remembers the

medical staff apologising to us in this time but I do not remember this. I only remember the letter which was sent to my father from the hospital following her death, saying that they could not be held responsible.

18. As far as I am aware, the medical staff were doing everything they could for my mother at this time. I do not believe she faced any obstacles to treatment, or that there is anything more they could have done for her.
19. My mother passed away on 10 August 1997. On her death certificate the primary causes of death are recorded as 'Multiple Organ Failure' and 'Hepatitis C'. The secondary causes of death are recorded as 'COAD' (likely to mean Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease) and 'DVT' (likely to mean Deep Vein Thrombosis). I attach a copy of her death certificate as **[WITN3550002]**.
20. It was a devastating way to lose her. I remember thinking she must have been rotten inside. My father saw her after she had died, but told my sister and me that we should not see her, as she was not our mother anymore.
21. My mother and father had just bought a new house in Worcester. My mother had chosen all the furniture and decoration but she never got to see it or live there with him. My father moved into the new house without her the day after her funeral.
22. I still do not know how my father got through that time. For 18 months he sat alone at home, listening to music that reminded him of my mother. We used to go and visit him, and he would watch the grandchildren in the park through the window as he could not face getting up. Eventually, he decided that my mother would not have wanted him to live his life like that. He started travelling, he visited Florence first, and various other destinations. He lived for 15 years without my mother.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

23. I am not aware of my mother facing any difficulties obtaining treatment as a result of her HCV diagnosis.

24. I do not believe my mother or anyone in my family was ever offered psychological support or counselling as a result of what happened.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. I do not believe that any financial support was ever offered to my mother in her life. No financial assistance was offered to my father or any member of our family following her death.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. I have no other medical records except my mother's death certificate. There is a possibility my sister, June, will have information that I do not. She is also giving evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

30/11/20