

Witness Name: Michael Miles

Statement No.: W0753001

Exhibits: NIL

Dated:

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL MILES**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27 February 2019.

I, Michael Miles, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Michael Miles. My date of birth is GRO-C 1953 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a sheep farmer. I live with my wife, Christine, and we have 2 grown-up sons. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") by blood transfusion. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my life and the life of my family.
2. I can confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me in writing my statement. The Inquiry team has explained anonymity and I do not require any information to be kept private.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

3. I was infected with HCV after receiving blood transfusions as part of my treatment for injuries sustained from a motor accident.
4. On 15 February 1988 I was a passenger in a van that was involved in a serious accident. My hip and pelvis were smashed as a result of the collision. I was taken to Cuckfield Hospital, Haywards Heath where the consultants performed tests and x-rays and it was decided that they needed to perform an internal fixation operation.
5. On 22 February 1988 I was transferred to the Royal Sussex County Hospital ("the Royal Sussex) in Brighton. On 26 February 1988 I underwent the operation to reset my pelvis and hip, which lasted six hours. I understand I was given further blood transfusions during this operation. I recall being hooked up to blood multiple times during my stay in hospital. Unfortunately 2 weeks after the operation, an infection set in. I stayed in hospital in Brighton for a further three months.
6. On 1 May 1988 I was finally sent home from hospital. On my departure I was given a Blood Transfusion Centre s stating my blood type, but I didn't receive an explanation as to why it was given to me.
7. I have attempted to obtain my medical records from the hospitals I attended in 1988, however, I have been informed by staff that they must have been destroyed.
8. In 2014, after a period of feeling unwell, I went to my GP and she conducted routine blood tests to see what the issue was. My results came back showing abnormal liver function. My GP asked about my drinking habits; she must have thought I was an alcoholic because of my liver function results. My GP suggested I further tests, which I consented to.

9. I attended another GP appointment where it was confirmed that I was HCV positive. When I heard this news from my GP I couldn't believe it. I was horrified. My GP told me that there was an antiviral drug named Interferon available to treat HCV. My GP thought I should take Interferon, however I was reluctant, as I had heard the side effects would be hard to deal with. I believe I was given adequate information about HCV and looking after myself including advising me to stop drinking.

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

10. To the best of my knowledge I have not contracted any other infections besides HCV from infected blood. My wife and I were also tested for HIV; fortunately the results were negative.

### **Section 4. Consent**

11. I do not recall consenting to the blood transfusions I received in 1988, however; I do not believe I had any option and I accept that I was undergoing life-saving treatment and the doctors were acting in my best interest at the time. I would not have consented to being given infected blood had I known.
12. I have always given my consent to tests that have been undertaken.
13. Following my diagnosis with HCV I consented to participating as a volunteer for research undertaken by Dr Collier. I donated 10 pints of blood to this project.

## **Section 5. Impact**

### **Health and Treatment**

14. Prior to my diagnosis with HCV I had been feeling tired, irritable and had periods of very bad moods. In the past I had excused these feelings and behaviour as being due to my hip, which would cause me issues.
15. Following diagnosis, my GP referred me to Swindon Great Western Hospital ("the Great Western"). On 13 June 2014 I attended an appointment with a specialist at the Great Western. We discussed treatment options, including Interferon. I refused to take Interferon as I was aware of the side effects and thought it would interfere with my work. I felt pressure to take Interferon, but the sheep cannot take care of themselves and I could not afford to take six months off of work. I also underwent a liver biopsy.
16. Later in 2014, I was referred to Dr Jane Collier, a specialist at the John Radcliffe Hospital ("the John Radcliffe"), Oxford. Dr Collier informed me that my liver was only mildly damaged and said I had time to wait for treatment. I visited Dr Collier every 6 months for review appointments.
17. After about 18 months after I was diagnosed, I became aware of a new drug called Sofosbuvir that had a 96 per cent clear rate. It was waiting to be approved at the time. After six weeks of it being available, I went to the hospital to get the medicine. I was put on a list, and had to wait for priority patients to receive the funding for the drug. I was anxious to get the drug called Dr Jane Collier 3 weeks later. She said I should come back to the hospital in a week and she would slip me in. Treatment from Dr Collier was very good. Dr Collier informed me that they could not afford to treat me with it as it cost £30,000.

18. On 23 March 2017 I commenced Sofosbuvir treatment. I took 1 pill per day for 3 months. The symptoms from this treatment were like having a mild flu and I recall feeling groggy, but I was still able to work during the treatment.
19. Following this treatment I continued to attend hospital appointments every month for testing and monitoring.
20. In October 2018 I was informed that I was clear of HCV. Following this news, I have not yet attended a follow up appointment. My consultant has told me that the condition of my liver is functioning at about 80 per cent.
21. I am also pre-diabetic and have slightly high blood pressure. I understand these medical issues are a consequence of having had HCV.

#### Family and Social

22. When I was diagnosed, my wife had asked the GP to be tested for HCV, but the testing never eventuated. The consultant at the Great Western suggested that my wife be tested for HCV. My wife tested positive for HCV antibodies meaning at one point she was actually infected with HCV. We were informed that the HCV had naturally cleared.
23. To my knowledge my sons have not been tested for HCV. As my sons were already grown up when I learnt of my diagnosis, my illness has not had an impact on their upbringing or education.
24. My illness has had an impact on my social life to an extent; I no longer go to pubs, but still enjoy dining out.

## Financial and Work

25. In 2014 my farm was financially impacted, as we had to sell a number of breeding ewes to cut down the level of lambing. I was not well enough to cope with the numbers that we would have usually been dealing with.

## Stigma

26. I have never felt discriminated against or prejudiced because of HCV. Although, I have gotten the impression when speaking to other people about HCV that they feel it is a disease associated with rakishness or that you've had multiple partners.

27. I recently broke a bone in my hand. I attended the Great Western Hospital Swindon to have an x-ray. The doctor subsequently wrote to my GP and the letter included the line, "I note from the records he has Hepatitis C." I don't understand why this was included in the letter, as I no longer have HCV, and I am unable to understand the relevance to receiving an x-ray.

## Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

28. I am cross that there has never been a look-back exercise undertaken by the NHS. I believe I should have been informed earlier about my infection with HCV.

29. In 2001 I had revision surgery on my hip at Eastbourne Hospital. There was discussion or mention of my past blood transfusions and no questions were asked of me about it. I would have thought that my blood would have been tested at that point.

30. Following my initial diagnosis by my GP I made it my business to find out why I had contracted HCV. I went onto the Hepatitis C Trust website and discovered that having a transfusion was a method of contracting HCV. I had not been aware of the contaminated blood scandal prior to my diagnosis. I recall there was a HIV scare in the 1980's, and my only knowledge of HCV was that I thought it carried a death sentence.

31. I have never had any problem with obtaining dental treatment. Most of the dealings I have had with the NHS have been positive.

32. Throughout my treatment I have not been offered psychological support or counselling. A consultant at the John Radcliffe hospital casually mentioned that mental health support was available, but it wasn't specifically offered to me. I have been informed by the Inquiry that the British Red Cross are providing a counselling service for witnesses.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

33. I have received no financial compensation in relation to my HCV infection.

34. I had heard about the Skipton Fund after being diagnosed. I learned of it when I sought compensation from a no-win-no-fee type law firm. I picked a firm online, called them and asked about compensation for my infection. They would not take on my case but directed me to apply for the Skipton Fund. After about a year of being diagnosed I called the fund to ask for the paperwork to be sent. When I received and filled out the form, I took it to the consultant, Jane Collier in the John Radcliff Hospital in Oxford. I was asking at the time how much the new drug Sofosbuvir would cost to go private, and I wanted to apply to the fund for payment towards the treatment. She informed me that it was

£30,000 and told me that someone should have probably mentioned the fund.

35. When I went about the process of applying to the Fund, the consultant raised concern that they could not prove that the HCV was derived from the transfusion. She filled in the form but also stated on it that there would be trouble proving it. She also wrote that it would be impossible to prove in a letter to my GP. It has proven impossible to show that I even attended the hospital for my accident and subsequent operation. I have tried hard to retrieve any records of the incident. So unfortunately my experience with the Skipton Fund was not successful.

36. I have not tried to apply again. I am loathed to do so, they have given me treatment, you can try and prove it all you want until you are blue in the face, but you just get exhausted of trying to find records. I am slightly disappointed about the level of compensation considering I had to take medication which affected my work for about three months, my wife caught the infection and my fluctuating liver health.

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

37. I believe that the NHS has made a huge mistake and have tried to cover up the scandal. The NHS should have called around to people who had potentially received infected blood advising that they should be tested. Blood should have been screened to a much higher standard.

38. I receive the Hepatitis C Trust newsletter; it was through their website that I learned about the Inquiry. I am pleased that the Inquiry is happening and I am happy to assist the Inquiry in any way possible.



**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

16/4/2019

