

Witness Name: Colin Bissett

Statement No: **WITN2089001**

Exhibits: **none**

Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

---

### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF COLIN BISSETT**

---

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 November 2018.

I, Mr Colin Bissett will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Colin Bissett. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1983. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am working full time as a mechanic working at Norman Laing & Co, Garage, based in Blairgowrie. I intend to speak about my late father, Iain Bissett's, illness of Hepatitis C. In particular, this statement will deal with the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.

#### **Section 2 How Affected**

2. My father and his brothers were Haemophiliacs. My father was born on GRO-C GRO-C 1954. He had numerous transfusions over his life for various injuries and he eventually had a liver transplant in 2007. He died in GRO-C 2016. I did not know the type of haemophilia that my father had but I have now seen from his

medical records that my father suffered from severe haemophilia, which following a liver transplant in 2007, improved to moderate haemophilia type B (Christmas disease, factor IX deficiency).

3. My father was originally under the care of Maryfield Hospital in Dundee. He was then moved to Ninewells, and the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary when he had his liver transplant. He was once treated at Kings Cross Hospital.
4. I have now seen an entry from my father's medical records in 1972 which shows that he was admitted to Maryfield Hospital after he hit his hand with a hammer while working on his car, which resulted in a haematoma on his left hand. Save for one other bleed into his ankle in 1961, this was his first hospital admission. He was given fresh frozen plasma which caused an allergic reaction. I understand that my mother, Moira says in her statement that my dad believed this was when he first became infected, although we have never had any further information about this and I was not aware of this at the time. I can produce this entry in evidence and I identify it as **WITN2089002**.
5. My father had several bad reactions to the blood transfusions he received thorough his life. When he was an adult, I remember he had a vasectomy after he had finished having children. Dad had 3 children, myself, my brother Fraser Bissett and Maureen Bissett. After he had the vasectomy he felt very unwell and he had an extreme reaction. His skin was almost peeling off. His feet and joints were swollen up. His whole body reacted very badly. I do not know where he had the procedure and I don't know when he had the procedure, I just know it would have taken place after 1983.
6. I do not know what information was given to my father before any of his transfusions about the risk of being infected with a blood born condition. I do not know the circumstances which gave rise to his infection with hepatitis C. I am unable to say what blood products my father was receiving at the time he was infected.

7. I have now had shown to me extracts from my father's medical records which show that he was first diagnosed with hepatitis C in 1995. He had previously been taken ill from his work. He was admitted to Kings Cross Hospital, Dundee and spent weeks in hospital. I do not think that he was diagnosed straight away, but I remember that my dad met with doctors from the Infectious Diseases unit which we all thought was very strange. My mother, Moira Bissett gives further information about this in her statement. At this point I was not aware that he had hepatitis C. About a year after this hospital admission, he was still very unwell. He was still not fully recovered and had swollen joints along with aches and pains. Dad still worked during this time, he would make sure he went to work as much as possible even if he was in pain. When he was not able to go to work he would stay at home in bed. My Mum would help him when he stayed at home, there was no other carer.

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

8. I am not aware of any other infections which my father had than Hepatitis C, although I now know in 2004, he was told that there was a possibility that he may have been infected with variant CJD. I can produce a letter in evidence that refers to this and identify it as **WITN2089003**.

### **Section 4. Consent**

9. I think my father may have been tested upon without his knowledge. He had a lot of tests done but not a lot of information was passed back and forward to him or us as his family. I recall my parents remarking how strange they found the period in the early 1990's when the doctors from the Infectious diseases unit, spoke to my dad. It made no sense to them at the time.
10. I was very young at the time and I am not sure how much information was given to my dad. I remember my mum and dad being very confused and having little information available to them.

11. I believe it is possible that my father was subject to research by the doctors at the time. I believe this may have been the case because the doctors were taking a lot of blood from him. The presence of the infectious diseases doctors in the early 1990s indicates that they were aware of something. I don't have any further information on my belief.

## **Section 5. Impact**

### *Physical and mental Impact on my father*

12. I am unable to fully speak about how the infection impacted my father. My father was a very strong man and he never complained, never once throughout his life. He was always very determined. It was difficult for him as he was self-employed throughout his life and his health issues obviously impacted on this. He ran his own bakery business, which was known as Blair Bakeries and as a teenager I could see that his body was failing him. He was in pain every day. He was just trying to get through the day. As the disease progressed on it got to the point where he couldn't leave his bed. His walking was very badly and he struggled to stay upright at times. This was in the later 1990's and early 00's. Dad never had walking aides to help him. He would always just be slightly off balance and slower. If he stumbled, someone would help him.

13. My father eventually had to give up running the bakery as a result of his ill health in around 1992/93. Dad did not discuss how he felt about having to give up work however I imagine this would have had a significant impact on him. He was a workaholic and this would have had a big impact on him emotionally. I remember that after he stopped working we had to downsize houses quite significantly. We went from having our own rooms in a large house to a much smaller house where my brother and I certainly had to share a room and it was a good deal smaller in general. Mum would always apologise and say that she wished she could give us everything that we wanted. They did get by though. Mum worked and we always seemed to be OK financially. Mum and Dad didn't discuss financial worries with us other than these comments.

14. Physically the Hepatitis took everything from him. It was breaking down his liver and his brain started to be affected very badly. He would phone and have conversations that were similar to conversations you would have with someone with Alzheimer's Syndrome. We would have the same conversation 5 times over and then after the phone call ended he would phone me again and he would speak to me about the topic again as he could just not recall phoning me. His brain and his liver were really poor at this point in 2001 or 2002. His capacity was totally gone. Some days we would speak and he would have to take really long pauses between speaking because he needed to figure out what his thoughts were and then trying to respond with. Other time he would pause to work out what was being said to him. It was a nightmare for him.

15. My father never complained so I don't really know the full extent of the impact of the treatment he received for the hepatitis on his mental health. He always bore the brunt of pain and mental stresses himself. He was a very strong person. However, I can say that my father's life was destroyed. Simple things like going out for a drink were a no as he had to keep his liver in optimum condition. He had a lot of friends and family employed, so giving this up was hugely hard on him.

#### Impact of infection on my life

16. My mum and my dad went away a lot and there are sections of his life I don't know, I can only give you a window into what it was like from my perspective as his son. When I was a young adult I became very aware of the situation and the severity of it for my dad. At that point, I really struggled. I probably drank a lot of alcohol myself out of fear of losing him. That was a hugely emotional part of my life. As life crept on, his liver deteriorated. It left me with this uncontrollable feeling of being unable to do anything and being unable to help. I was just watching a family member fading away, over the years. After the transplant, I was very grateful for the extra 10 years that it gave my dad. It made a big difference and it made him more comfortable in life. Generally, there was a stigma around people being diagnosed with hepatitis C. The stigma with Dad's diagnosis was more limited as he did not tell people that he

was infected. He certainly didn't want other people knowing in case it affected his business. Dad's hepatitis C is not talked about much within the family.

#### Liver transplant and cancer diagnosis

17. In 2007 my father had a liver transplant. There was a period just before the transplant where he had to attend Ninewells hospital and the doctors could see he was about to die. His liver function was virtually zero and he was a dark orange yellow colour. He had a transplant and from there he was like a different man. We went to see him after the operation and his brain was working remarkably well. He couldn't stop talking and it was like he had 10 years' worth of information that he had wanted to get out but couldn't. It was amazing having a conversation with him again where previously it had been so frustrating. His health from then on was much improved. He was probably in a lot of pain on the inside but he did not like to show this. For 6-7 years, he led a very good quality life as the operation had been a big success. He was on a lot of tablets to keep going due to the operation but it gave him a good quality of life. I don't know the names of all the tablets he was on. I do know he was on tramadol for pain, diazepam for pain and anti-rejection tablets for his liver. I don't know what other medication he was on.

18. In October 2013, around 7 years after the liver transplant my dad found out he had developed lymphoma. The doctors believe this was due to the prolonged period he was on the anti-rejection tablets from the transplant. He had chemotherapy for several months and by April 2014 was in remission. However, his condition eventually began to deteriorate and he started not being able to walk far or participate in the day's activities like previously. I remember that there was a routine blood check and they found that his white blood cell count was virtually at zero. They conducted further tests at that point and found out it was leukaemia in September 2015. He had chemotherapy for several months in 2014 for approximately 6 months, but his liver was already quite damaged already that point. The virus was starting to win again. He managed two sessions of chemotherapy but by the third session his vitals were very poor. The leukaemia caused him to pass away in

GRO-C 2016.

19. After he had the transplant, they did try him on another course of drugs to fight the Hepatitis C because he had a brand new liver. I remember there was more of a success this time because the drugs seemed assist with his recovery with clearing the virus. I am not sure what they were called. My mother has always wondered if the improved version of the drugs at the time was the thing that brought on the lymphoma and leukaemia. She queries this all the time and she will know better how he was, than I do.

20. I don't know whether my father faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing treatments and what those difficulties may have been.

21. After he got his new liver he got a new lease on life and was able to attempt a return to work but he was in a lot of pain and had to slow down.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

22. My dad always spoke very highly of the doctors who were involved in his care. They were very good at managing his treatment. I don't know if my dad faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support but I don't recall any problems.

23. My father and our family were never offered any psychological support. I think this is hugely inadequate. There seems to be support for everything nowadays but our family never even had the question of 'Are you ok' being asked. We had not support or care. We had to manage by ourselves. No one ever approached us for support which is what stays with me now.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

24. I don't know about the financial support my father received as I was a young child. I believe my mother, Moira deals with this in her statement.

25. The only further comments I have about the various trusts and funds are that financial assistance for us would have been of assistance as the lack of money would have put a strain on Mum and Dad and created a lot of insecurity for us as a family. I am unaware if we were on benefits at any point. I went out to work at a younger age at age 16, which was a way to bring more money into the household as well.

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed  Colin bissett (May 5, 2020)

May 5, 2020  
Dated