

Witness Name: Sharlene Kelly Forbes

Statement No.: WITN2135001

Exhibits: none

Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SHARLENE KELLY FORBES**

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

I Sharlene Kelly Forbes, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Sharlene Kelly Forbes. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1974. My address is known to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about having anti-c in my blood following a blood transfusion. In particular, I will speak about how this has impacted on my life and that of my family.

#### **Section 2. How Infected**

2. On the 29th June, 1986 I was involved in a horse riding accident. I was 11 years of age at the time and was living with my family at GRO-C GRO-C. On this date I was out riding a horse in Kirkhill woods, Gorebridge, Midlothian with others. Whilst one of the horses was grazing it got spooked and ran off without its rider. I was still

on horseback so I set off to catch the horse. As I was about to catch the other horse's reins I fell off my own horse. As a consequence a branch went through my leg causing severe injuries severing my main artery.

3. I was taken by ambulance to the Royal Sick Children's Hospital in Edinburgh where I was rushed in for surgery. I remember waking up in the intensive care unit. I was attached to bags of blood that I was receiving intravenously. The doctor who was in charge of me was called Dr Bisset. I was told that I had been in surgery for eight hours and had required a blood transfusion of 4 pints of blood. I was clinically dead for 8 minutes.
4. I was only a child at the time and I don't know if my mother was given any information or advice about the risks of being exposed to infection through having a blood transfusion.
5. I believe I got anti-c through being given contaminated blood products. My blood group is O rhesus positive and anti-c is like an army attacking an invader in my blood. If I have a foreign body in my body the anti c goes into battle.
6. When I was 16 years of age I was having gynaecological problems. My mother took me to St John's Hospital in Livingston for an exploratory examination. It was at this time I was told I had anti-c and anti-e in my blood. I was given a blue card and told to have it with me at all times. I was told it would be needed if I had to have a blood transfusion or in the event I became pregnant. I didn't know what anti-c or anti-e meant and it wasn't explained to me. My mother was with me at the time and nothing was explained to her either. I do not know the name of the doctor I saw at this time.

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

7. I did not receive any known infections as a result of being given contaminated blood. I got anti-e and anti-c.

### **Section 4. Consent**

8. Throughout my four pregnancies I had my blood taken on many occasions. I do believe my blood was being tested without my knowledge, consent and possibly for the purpose of research.

### **Section 5. Impact**

9. When I was 19 years of age in 1993 I fell pregnant with my oldest daughter. I was having my bloods taken by my local doctors for examination. My local doctor was Dr Carr at Bridge Street in Musselburgh. I was also appointed a midwife at the Eastern General, Seafield, Edinburgh. I cannot remember her name. It was explained to me that if a rhesus negative mother is carrying a rhesus positive baby it can be very serious but I am not rhesus negative. The mother's blood sees the baby's blood as a foreign invader and starts to attack it. I was monitored very carefully regarding my titer levels, as I was told if they started rising they would be a serious risk to my unborn child. Fortunately my daughter was born fit and healthy.
10. I went on to have three more children. I was closely monitored throughout these pregnancies also. My blood group is rhesus positive, all my children are rhesus positive as well. Two of my children were delivered by emergency C-section because of anti-c. One of my children was born 4 weeks early and the other was 6 weeks early. Both required to be admitted to ICU.
11. There have been no obvious physical effects on me by having anti-c in my blood. Throughout my life I do get days when I get very fatigued and

I catch viruses more than most. I do wonder if this is because of the anti-c in my blood. I remember in my 20s I appeared to pick up all manner of ailments. Looking back, I wonder if this was because of the anti-c.

12. I am aware of the stigma surrounding hepatitis C and HIV. I did not contract either of these infections but I did contract anti-c by being given contaminated blood. Because of the stigma I do not tell anyone of my condition.
13. Due to the troubles I have endured with anti-c, holding down a job has proven to be difficult for me which has had a financial impact.
14. The impact on my children of me having anti-c is that GRO-C  
GRO-C.

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

15. I have had difficulties with obtaining a referral to Haematology despite the fact I was advised by one doctor that I should be under the care of a specialist. My GP referred me to Haematology, and after 3 months, I requested that my GP follow up on the status of this referral, to which I was told he would e-mail them. 6 months later, I was told that Haematology did not need to see me at all and I did not need to carry a card with me about my anti-c status. I requested a copy of the e-mails that my GP had sent to the hospital, to ensure that the details of my original request had been put in the referral in full, because I had not requested anything in relation to the card and found this response to be unusual. These e-mails have not been released to me.
16. I have never been offered or received any counselling or psychological support for having being given contaminated blood.

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

17. I have received no financial assistance as a result of having anti-c through contaminated blood.

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

18. I have done a lot of research into contaminated blood. I have looked at the work of Dr Gareth Nicholson who is a Professor in America specialising in microbiology. He discovered a lot of American, French and British veterans who had been given blood during the war had got hepatitis C and HIV through being given contaminated blood. The microplasma genetically modified can lie dormant for 40 years. I've got anti-c which is foreign so I do fear for my future as blood tests give negative results. I believe that anti-c masks the results.
19. About four years ago I did contact the Royal sick Children's Hospital in Edinburgh to request a copy of my medical records for the time I had the transfusion. I was told that because it was so long ago my records would have been destroyed. I disagree that consent was given by my mother and I for my accident file to go to Edinburgh Medical School/University for study of the nature of complex surgery.
20. I have tried on a few occasions over the years to trace these records and contacted Scottish Blood Transfusion to track my blood pack file, to no success. It has also come to my attention, that there is wrong and missing information on my normal medical files, for example on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986 : skin grafting (29<sup>th</sup> June 1986 vein grafting).
21. I have been told by medical staff in the past that because I have anti-c that I have possibly been given contaminated blood. The effect on my life is that I am constantly cautious, as if I were, or if my children were to be injured, resulting in a bleed, we would not be able to receive the universal blood, it would kill us!
22. Having anti-c in my blood 24/7 is attacking something in my blood

stream! Despite making many changes to build my immunity I am managing flu like systems, rashes, itching, fatigue, nausea etc

23. The anti-e in my blood is gone now, which I believe to possibly be food related. I religiously follow "Eat right for your type".
24. .I do not wish to remain anonymous for the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed 

<b>GRO-C</b>
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Dated Jul 8, 2020