

Witness Name: Andrew Ian Parsons

Statement No.: WITN3208001

Exhibits: WITN3208002 - WITN3208004

Dated: March 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANDREW IAN PARSONS

1. I, Andrew Ian Parsons, will say as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

2. My name is Andrew Ian Parsons. My date of birth is GRO-C 1963. I reside at GRO-C. I have a son and a daughter and I am separated. I work on the railway in signalling.
3. I am providing this statement in relation to my father who had mild haemophilia and was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of his treatment with blood products. I have a sister, Tracey, who has also provided a statement to the Inquiry in relation to our father (WITN3131001).

Section 2: How Affected

4. My father, Alan Parsons, was born on GRO-C 1937. I knew as a child that he had haemophilia but it did not cause him any significant problems. I do not remember it having a negative impact on my childhood. We were a close family and dad and I had lots in common as we both worked on the railway.
5. My father was under the care of Oxford Haemophilia Centre at Churchill Hospital and for dental treatment he always went to the John Radcliffe Hospital to be on

the safe side in case he had a bleed. On one occasion in 1982 he was given Factor VIII as when undergoing dental work.

6. He also was given treatment in May 1987 when he fell off a ladder. This was a week before I was getting married. I do not know what type of treatment he received at that time. After this, I only remember him having Recombinant Factor VIII. He had quite of a lot of it near the end of his life when he was undergoing urgent procedures.
7. I do not know when my father found out that he had Hepatitis C. However, I think it was in or around 1985. It was certainly before he fell off the ladder in May 1987 as I recall there was a lot of blood around and we (my sister and I) knew not to touch it. Before that we had been told that if he cut himself, we should stay away. In that way, Hepatitis C was like AIDS.
8. I remember my father saying, in reference to the Factor VIII he received when having dental treatment in 1982, *"I wouldn't mind but I didn't need it in the first place"*. He was not having an extraction and it was given to him as a precaution. In a letter he wrote to his MP in 2001 he stated that he was infected in 1982 so it must have been on this occasion he was infected (WITN3208002). I do not know if he was asked if he wanted to have Factor VIII but if he had been, knowing my father, if the dentist said he should have had it, he would say that they knew best and would have accepted it. People of his generation did not challenge doctors, it was only when I started attending appointments with him in 2010 that I started questioning the doctors about his treatment; he would never have done that.

Section 3: Other Infections

9. My father received a letter about vCJD which upset him. My sister has mentioned that this was when my mother was alive so it would have been before 2011. He was very negative for a couple of months after getting it. I do not think he had any tests in relation to this. He received a lot of letters from health professionals which

covered all angles; it felt like they were sending them out just in case something went wrong. Every time he received something like that he would think he was going to die.

Section 4: Consent

10. I do not know whether my father consented to testing for Hepatitis C as I did not start attending appointments with him until 2010.

Section 5: Impact

Decline of health and treatment for Hepatitis C

11. Tracey has set out in detail the decline in my father's health following his diagnosis with Hepatitis C. I have set out additional details which I recall below.
12. My father underwent a 12 month course of Interferon in the early 2000s. He wrote a letter to his MP in May 2001 in which he refers to "*intensive treatment over the next 12 months*", which must have been the treatment with Interferon (WITN3208002). In this letter he also stated that his infection with Hepatitis C was causing him liver problems; he had cirrhosis of the liver by this time. He picked up for a while after the treatment with Interferon but it was unsuccessful in clearing the virus. This appeared to be the start of there always being something wrong with him. He went to the John Radcliffe Hospital for quarterly appointments but I felt like they were just going through the motions with him.
13. In 2015 he was offered a course of Ledipasvir and Sofosbuvir. He was quite pragmatic about this treatment. He was told the damage had already been done but was asked if he wanted another 18 months to live so he went for it. He cleared the virus and his records show that his liver function did improve after this treatment; he had not seen any positive results of treatment until this stage. However, he developed liver cancer and started getting ascites. He had to have five litres drained from his stomach on one occasion. He was suffering from

fatigue, rashes, and itchy skin. It got to the point that we did not know what else was going to happen to him.

14. In 2016 he had chemotherapy to treat lymphoma. He started on Vinblastine but this did not agree with him and this resulted in him having eight rounds of treatment. One of side effects he suffered from with chemotherapy was neuropathy. As a result, he was no longer able to drive so I had to drive him around. My father kept notes of treatment he received from 31 December 2015, when he started on Ledipasvir and Sofosbuvir, until 29 November 2016 and I have exhibited these with my statement (WITN3208003).
15. After three months of chemotherapy he was given the all clear. He was clear of Hepatitis C and now he was clear of lymphoma. Even the doctors did not understand; no one completely recovers like that.
16. Shortly after this he started complaining about stomach pains. There are a number of letters in my father's papers which refer to him being in remission but making reference to him having pain in his stomach and to other issues he was having (WITN3208004). We thought this was due to ascites so I took him to the hospital to get it drained. When we went in they were only able to drain half a litre from it. He had stopped eating and had lost a lot of weight. I lost my temper with him and said *"you've got the all clear from lymphoma, now it's something else"*. I took him straight up to the cancer ward, the staff did not like it but I left him there overnight. In the morning we were told that he had colon cancer. I was angry and said *"you don't get cancer in a week, he got the all clear last week and now he has a different type of cancer"*. They said that it was quite advanced. My father asked how long he had left to live and was told he only had two weeks.
17. We took him home that day and the nurses from MacMillan Cancer Support ("Macmillan") were helpful. We already knew them due to his previous treatment for cancer. He lived for two weeks, as the doctors had said he would, and died on 3 July 2017.

18. When Dr Howard, my father's GP, was completing the death certificate she said that the causes of death were all linked to Hepatitis C but if we wanted a specific cause of death a post mortem would need to be conducted. We did not want that so the causes of death are listed as frailty in old age, cirrhosis of liver, Hepatitis C and cell lymphoma.

Impact of Hepatitis C on my father's personal life

19. After my father's diagnosis with Hepatitis C I do not think my parents could have an intimate relationship in any form; even if my father sneezed on my mother she panicked. She looked after him and he doted on her.
20. My mother had a number of strokes and I attribute this to stress and the fact that things had to be different as a married couple with my father for 20 years. Dad just plodded along and did not make a song and dance about anything. Our family tended to focus on my mother's health rather than my father's until my mother passed away in 2011.
21. His close friends knew that he had Hepatitis C. He was terrified of passing it on to anyone and would not let anyone drink out of his glass, which was probably unnecessary.
22. As mentioned above, my father wrote to his MP about the contaminated blood scandal. He also did a lot of things for charity. After my mother had a stroke, he became the treasurer of a small organisation in Milton Keynes called Different Strokes which was associated with Different Strokes UK. He was instrumental in transforming the organisation and through that he got involved with a lot of health care professionals. He was also the patient representative for Buckinghamshire Ambulance, a role I have now taken over. He understood how the healthcare system should work and was quite the campaigner. It was not until it was announced there was going to be a public inquiry into infected blood that he started making a noise about it.

23. He was a civil engineer on the railways and when he reached the maximum amount he could put into his pension with the railway he retired early and started a consultancy. He was working as a consultant when he was treated with Interferon in 2001. My sister recalls that he was not allowed to work on the railway while he was on this treatment. This would be because you have to complete a medical form and have a track safety card. If you declare you are on certain medication, your sponsorship will be withdrawn and you will not be allowed to work. My father was extremely honest and would have declared this. He would have also declared his conditions when seeking insurance.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

24. My father was not offered any counselling from the NHS. I think, if he had been offered counselling initially, he would have accepted it. However, as time went on he took it upon himself to learn everything he could about his condition and could probably have educated the counsellor about his situation.
25. We had a lot of support from Macmillan, the nurses loved him and came to his funeral. I had some phone calls after he died with Macmillan.

Section 7: Financial Support

26. My father dealt with his applications to the Skipton Fund by himself and Tracey and I were not involved in this process.
27. I remember when it was announced on the news that there was going to be a public inquiry, the Skipton Fund was discussed and he noticed that what had been said was wrong. He wrote to the Skipton Fund about this and someone wrote back.
28. There was probably a lot of financial assistance that he could apply for that he did not bother with; he would have thought that he should leave the money for someone else.

29. We applied for a blue badge for the car for him, and after some initial suggestion that he was not eligible, this was granted.

Section 8: Other Issues

30. From hearing about things said at the Inquiry, I am now starting to recognise why things happened when we were children. I am not bitter and twisted about it. I want his memory and thousands of others to be acknowledged. I believe that someone somewhere knew what was happening; they bypassed the system and the consequences were enormous. The Inquiry needs to make sure this never happens again. I believe that this all came about because of American blood products.
31. If the United Kingdom is going to have the National Health Service, we need to make sure it works. The Inquiry also needs to make sure people that are infected or affected are looked after and recompensed; there are people worse off than we are.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated..... 28/3/21