

Witness Name: Linda MENZIES

Statement No.: WITN3641001

Exhibits: **WITN3641002 – WITN3641004**

Dated: 24.09.19

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LINDA MENZIES

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 17 September 2019.

I, Linda Menzies, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Linda Menzies. My date of birth is GRO-C1950 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live with my second husband in GRO-C. I made my career as a teacher and am now part-retired, working as chief invigilator for one of the local schools.
2. I contracted hepatitis B (HBV) in 1975 after receiving multiple blood transfusions for two separate post-partum haemorrhages. I believe that I cleared the virus relatively quickly, but was not given much information by doctors either during or after my illness. I describe my circumstances in the following statement.

Section 2. How Infected

Infection and diagnosis

3. I was originally scheduled to give birth in my GP's maternity unit around [GRO-C] 1975. However, my blood pressure skyrocketed in the weeks before I was due, so I was instead booked into Bellshill Maternity Hospital, Lanarkshire (no longer in existence).
4. I ended up being admitted on Sunday [GRO-C] and induced on the morning of Monday [GRO-C]. At lunchtime they decided to do a forceps delivery as the baby was in distress, after which he was whisked off to the neonatal unit because he was very small. Somebody later suggested that I had been induced too soon.
5. I remained in hospital for about five days. All seemed fine when I got home, but then I started passing clots. I mentioned this to my midwife and my doctor, but was told that it would settle down.
6. A week or so after the birth, around [GRO-C] 1975, I was talking to my neighbour at the back door when I started haemorrhaging. I was admitted to hospital again, and I had a dilation and curettage performed – where they scrape out the womb. I was told there was residue placenta that had been causing the bleeding.
7. I was given a blood transfusion on this occasion, and stayed in hospital for almost a week.
8. I think that it may have been the very next day after being discharged, that I started bleeding even more. It was much worse this time. It was pouring out of me. I remember that I had a sheet around me and it was soaking. I was again admitted to hospital ([GRO-C] 1975). My GP, who had reached the house at the same time as the ambulance, jokingly said to me, "It's people like you who give people like me a heart attack!" They

did an internal inspection at the hospital which was really unbearable. I remember feeling very cold and having pins and needles. After that I was sedated.

9. When I came to in the ward, my arm was on a board with a drip in it. I had apparently been given a lot more blood on this occasion too. I was out the whole time though, so I don't know how much.
10. I stayed in hospital for another week this time. Because I'd had internal lacerations and stitches, I was black and blue down below. I recall attending a physio session with other patients from the ward and not even being able to sit on a chair.
11. About three weeks later, I experienced unexplained pain in my joints. They were swollen and it was sore to move. I attended the GP and was told it was serum fever. This was treated with painkillers.
12. Maybe two weeks after this, I noticed the whites of my eyes were yellow. I called the doctor who said it was jaundice. He told me I shouldn't be too near my baby. Because I was alone at the time and while I waited for my husband to come home from his work, I remember putting him in his swing chair and tying a cord to it so that I could rock him while lying in bed. The GP came back to the house and told me that I would have to go back into hospital for tests.
13. I was admitted to Strathclyde Hospital in Motherwell (no longer in existence) on 3 October 1975. I was taken into Infectious Diseases Unit where I remained in isolation for practically the whole month. I had to be away from my baby during this time.
14. I produce Dr Kelly's medical record card as **Exhibit WITN3641002**. It records on 03/10/75 "*Has developed jaundice (had blood transfusion 10/52 ago)*", although this wasn't communicated to me initially. I note that the two entries preceding this have likely been misdated by mistake: they should read 27/09/75 and 21/09/75.

Information provided

15. My bloods were taken regularly while I was in the Infectious Diseases Unit and I was told that I had hepatitis B. I asked them how I got it, but never got a straight answer. I didn't know anybody else who had had it. There was no history of it in my family or anything.
16. I don't think I was given very much information about hepatitis B. I was just told what I had, and no conclusive answer as to where I'd got it from, so information wasn't great at the time. I just knew that hepatitis affected the liver and gave you jaundice, but nothing else really.
17. Once discharged from the Infectious Diseases Unit, I wasn't told to be careful of this or of that – I was straight back to caring for my new born baby. I had already stopped breastfeeding during the second haemorrhaging episode, but no instruction was given as to this anyway.
18. None of my family members were advised to get tested.
19. I can't remember being given any regular medication to treat or manage the infection, but it was so long ago. I was certainly not taking anything when I came out of hospital, I would have remembered that.

Virus cleared

20. In spring or early summer of 1976, I received a letter asking if I would be prepared to attend Belvidere Hospital, London Road, Glasgow, as someone was conducting a study into people who had had blood infections. The study involved one visit, and giving them one lot of blood.
21. I can't remember the doctor's name, but when I asked him how I would have got hepatitis B he replied "Undoubtedly the blood transfusion." He said it quite matter-of-factly. I thought, "I didn't know that."

22. I can't remember exactly when I was told that I had cleared the virus. My guess would be that in early 1976 I was told I was clear. I really don't know though. I don't remember receiving a letter telling me so.

23. I don't have any current LFT's and so am not sure about the current state of my liver.

Other means of infection

24. Dr Kelly must have phoned the Consultant Pathologist at Bellshill Maternity Hospital and alerted him to my case of potential hepatitis transmission via blood transfusion. The Regional Director of Glasgow and West of Scotland Blood Transfusion Service then requested 5 mL of clotted blood from me, which was sent for testing. I produce this letter as **Exhibit WITN3641003**. I must have supplied a blood sample to the GP but I would have assumed that this was a routine test after my discharge from hospital. I was not informed of the reason for the test.

25. The results are communicated in a subsequent letter to Dr Kelly dated 10 November 1975. It explains that the blood products I received came originally from 28 donors, and that donor sera had been preserved in order to re-test individual donations. Each had been tested for hepatitis B surface antigen, and were negative. He concludes that *"either the most sensitive method of testing donations currently available is not sufficiently sensitive or the infection has been acquired in some other way."* I produce this letter as **WITN3641004**.

26. I was never informed of these communications at the time or afterwards. They have only come to light because of my request for records. I believe that I should have been told that they had looked into the blood that I was given.

27. I have no tattoos and only got my ears pierced during the 1980's, after these events. I have never used intravenous drugs nor had promiscuous sex.

28. I had two overseas trips during the relevant period (Athens 1974 and Paris 1975) but did not spend any time in hospital or suffer any illnesses abroad.

29. I am sure that there is nothing else which could have caused my infection with hepatitis B. The doctor at Belvidere didn't hesitate to suggest this.

Section 3. Other Infections

30. HBV is the only virus that I know I was infected with as a result of the blood transfusions.

31. I never used to get cold sores before this, but since receiving the blood transfusions I get them regularly. I wonder if it is because of a lowered immunity.

32. I also developed viral meningitis in 1981. I had taken the kids to Edinburgh for a few days on school holidays then ended up in the Royal Infirmary for two weeks. If my immune system was compromised from the hepatitis B, this could have been instrumental in me picking up the meningitis in the first place.

Section 4. Consent

33. I do not believe that I have been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent, or for the purposes of research.

34. I gave my full and proper consent to the above-mentioned study at Belvidere Hospital.

Section 5. Impact

Mental and physical effects

35. When I was first diagnosed with hepatitis B, I was in isolation and so was barely seeing anyone at all. My baby was miles away and I was only able to make the odd phone call to my mum on the hospital portable phone.
36. Not seeing my baby for a whole month, at a time when the baby was developing so much, was very hard. I felt very down and was crying a lot.
37. It hadn't occurred to me at the time that it was the blood transfusions. If I'd known it was that, I probably would have been furious. I didn't have the information necessary to be angry about it though.
38. I do feel angry now, being made to miss out on a month of my son's life and being stuck in an isolation ward. I know that the blood saved my life, but I still feel angry that it happened and probably angry that the people concerned will no longer be able to be pursued.
39. Physically, I was very unwell when I first went into hospital – nauseous and the rest. It's hard to distinguish though, because I was so unwell following the haemorrhaging.

Further medical complications

40. As mentioned in Section 3, I now get cold sores all the time.
41. I also wonder whether any lowered immunity meant I was more susceptible to developing viral meningitis in 1981.

Effect on private, family and social life

42. My first husband knew about as much as I did about hepatitis B. Luckily it didn't cause any problems between us though.
43. He also didn't get to see much of our son during the month I had to spend in isolation, as my baby was with my parents a bit over 30 miles away and none of us drove. My husband was a teacher in the local secondary school and could only make the trip at the weekend, a round trip of around three hours by bus and train.
44. Because I was infected for a relatively short period of time, I can't say there were any effects on my social life.

Stigma

45. I didn't really suffer any effects of stigma in relation to my infection with hepatitis B – a lot of people know what happened after Keith was born, it's not something that I'm frightened to talk about.

Education, work and financial effects

46. I didn't suffer knock-on effects in these respects. I wasn't working at the time that this happened, and my only jobs have been teaching based, so they have always approached me.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

47. I have not suffered difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment. It's more that I don't actually know what I did receive!
48. Counselling or psychological support have never been offered. I probably wouldn't bother now, but then – yes, I would have.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

49. I have not applied for nor receive any financial assistance from Trusts or Funds set up to distribute payments to Inquiry witnesses. Nothing was ever mentioned at the time either.

Section 8. Other Issues

50. I have never taken part in any campaigning nor engaged a solicitor in relation to these matters.

51. I find myself confused, angry and frustrated at what has happened to me. I have been told that I contracted hepatitis B and that I was infected via blood transfusions I was given. I was then never told that the blood I received from donors was tested and apparently not infected, yet I have no idea by what other means I might have contracted the virus if not via the transfusions.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____ GRO-C

Dated 24.9.19