

Witness Name: Karen Harrison

Statement No.: WITN550001

Exhibits: **WITN550002**

Dated: 09.05.2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KAREN HARRISON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 22 July 2021.

I, Karen Harrison, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Karen Harrison. My date of birth is GRO-C 1969. My address is GRO-C known to the Inquiry. I run my own accountancy firm. I intend to speak about my late godfather, William Lancelot Sudder who was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) following a catastrophic road-traffic accident in 1982. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him, his wife Elsie and our lives together.
2. I can confirm that I am not legally represented and that the provisions of the anonymity rules have been explained and I am happy to tell my story and for it to be publicly known.

GRO-C 2/5

3. I should point out that I am making this statement without reference to medical records and from memory. Events are sometime in the past and dates should be taken as approximates.

Section 2. How Affected

4. William was born on GRO-C 1930. He was for all purposes my uncle, although we were not biologically related. He spent the majority of his working life as a police officer. By the early 1980s', he was retired but still doing ad hoc jobs, including for the Royal Ordnance Factory in Birtley, within the borough of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.
5. One evening, 04 august 1982, William was travelling home from work by scooter when he collided with two motorcyclists who were driving recklessly. They pulled out in front of William causing him to take evasive action leading to a crash. They left him for dead with catastrophic injuries. They did not call the emergency services.
6. He was eventually taken to Dryburn Hospital, which has since been replaced by University Hospital of North Durham. His arms and legs had been crushed. He had also lost a lot of blood, for which he was given a blood transfusion. His blood group was rare; A-rhesus.
7. Because, he and Elsie GRO-A the Hospital were keen to avoid an amputation where possible. Various reconstructive surgeries, which were ground-breaking at the time were undertaken to repair his broken limbs. He was also given skin grafts to patch up his arms and wrists.
8. They grafted a bone from his arm and his other leg to reconstruct the leg which had been shattered. His injuries were so severe that he remained in Hospital for over a year. He was left with one leg 12cm shorter than the other and spent the rest of his life walking with a built-up shoe.

9. I have been made aware from his medical records, that after the initial transfusion on 04 or 05 August, William was given at least one further transfusion; on 02 November that year. He may have been given additional blood as his blood was cross-matched on 3 or 4 separate occasions and as mentioned he underwent numerous corrective surgeries. He was given up to 6 units at a time. When William was eventually discharged, he convalesced at home with a whole-splint frame supporting one of his legs. He was infamous locally for wearing a kilt, which I think helped to free up his injured leg.
10. Around 4 or 5 years before he was diagnosed with HCV in 2010, William was hospitalised for sepsis on two separate occasions. Any exposure or potential infection with the virus was not mentioned to him at any point since his accident, nor was the cause of the sepsis explained to him. I think he may have attributed the sepsis to the fact that his body was filled with metal.
11. Towards the beginning of 2010, William began to lose weight very rapidly. My Auntie Elsie, who has since passed away, became concerned. William was never one to complain but it was clear that he was unwell. Elsie and I encouraged him to consult his GP for blood tests. We were particularly worried that the sepsis might have returned.
12. Having seen his GP, Dr Nagi at Langley Park Surgery, DH7, William was referred to a consultant, whose identity I am not aware of, at Durham University hospital. Shortly thereafter, William informed us that he had been diagnosed with stage 4 liver cancer. The cancer was highly progressed. He was told that it was a direct result of having Hepatitis C undetected and untreated in his body for several decades. There was no mention of his condition prior to the referral to the consultant at the hospital.
13. I was personally devastated when I found out about his condition. God only knows how he himself felt. His family, and providing for them were

his life and now he was faced with a life changing condition. Elsie, I'm sure would have been traumatised by the news but she would not have let it show. In fact, neither of them would. They had Peter to worry about and they had been through so much already.

14. William's diagnosis with HCV was only mentioned in passing, as a secondary illness that didn't warrant discussion, yet it seems it was responsible for the cancer that had destroyed his liver. It was also mentioned as a matter-of-fact comment that the source of his HCV infection was contaminated blood. There was nothing about precautions or what it would mean for him and his family going forward. Surely, he was due some sort of explanation having been handed what was in effect a death sentence?
15. It was only after the appointment that William started to connect the dots and realise that he must have been given infected blood from the transfusions he received following his road traffic accident in the early 1980s. as far as I know he did not complain about it. They were old school and wouldn't think of questioning the doctors.
16. Prior to William's operation and transfusions, he was fit and healthy. He was happily married and as far as I am aware, did not receive any blood transfusions either before or subsequent to those provided after his accident. He was certainly never an IV drug user, nor did he have any tattoos. He was stationed in Cyprus in the army but never mentioned any major medical operations or interventions. Therefore, I can see no viable route in which he would have been infected with HCV other than the blood transfusions he received in the early 1980s.
17. The fact that he was completely unaware that he had infected blood in his system indicates that he was likely unaware of any risk of infected blood at the time in which this was administered. He was incapacitated when he received the blood, and would have likely died if he did not receive this. Nevertheless, my Auntie Elsie would have signed consent forms, if asked on his behalf. She was never informed of any potential

risks of infection related to the blood transfusion which William was given.

18. No one ever mentioned that Elsie or their son, Peter, who was born in 1968, should be tested for HCV or any other infection.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. To the best of my knowledge, William was not infected with any other viruses other than HCV as a result of receiving contaminated blood. However, I do not know whether he was tested for HIV.

Section 4. Consent

20. As reiterated previously, William was not aware that he was being tested for Hepatitis C, nor for any other viruses. His diagnosis came as a shock to him and the rest of us.
21. Although I do not think he had any medical treatment for either the liver cancer or HCV, I do not believe that there was any treatment available for his conditions that he was deliberately denied.

Section 5. Impact

22. Prior to his accident and blood transfusions in the early 1980s', William was a big, strapping, healthy individual. He had worked in the armed forces and also as a police officer for the majority of his career. He was always very active and enjoyed spending time in his garden, crafting all manner of things from wood. William's operation left him with life changing injuries.
23. For some time, William was feeling unwell, albeit he couldn't put his finger on what was wrong with him. As he wasn't one to complain, I can only imagine that for him to communicate this, he must have been

feeling acutely unwell. I didn't live with him, so he wouldn't have shared details of his ill-health with me. No one is going to tell their niece if they have diarrhoea and vomiting, particularly someone as private and stoic as William, but I was aware there were problems.

24. After his diagnosis with HCV and liver cancer, he deteriorated fairly quickly becoming a shadow of his former self. He had always been an out-door type, busy out in the garden or elsewhere, doing something, but he could no longer function normally. He relied on my parents and Auntie Elsie to ensure that his needs were met. This was very difficult for a man who had always prided himself on being independent, self-sufficient and looking after his family.

25. As a result of the catastrophic injuries he sustained in the road traffic accident, William was no longer able to continue with his part-time work in the Royal Ordnance Factory. Nevertheless, I don't believe his infection incurred any particular financial repercussions.

26. William's overriding concern throughout his life was his family. The difficult life experiences he and his wife Elsie endured, transformed them into stoic individuals. They lost their eldest son in a motorcycle accident.

GRO-A

GRO-A

27. To the best of my recollection, one day, William just felt desperately unwell. We called an ambulance and he was taken to hospital. I followed the ambulance in my vehicle. I can imagine that he was in a lot of pain. He died very shortly afterwards on 3 November 2010. His death certificate attributes the cause of death to 1a) Metastatic Hepatocellular Cancer, 1b) Liver Cirrhosis and 1c) Hepatitis C. This is exhibited at **WITN550002**.

28. The last thing William said to me before he died was, 'you have to look after my family'. He and Elsie had been married for almost 60 years. William was her soulmate and life partner. The primary impact the infected blood had on him was that it took him away from his family. He was absolutely distraught at the prospect that he wouldn't be around to look after them anymore. It completely knocked Elsie for six that her rock was no longer by her side.

29. As far as I recall there were no difficulties with the release of the body or with subsequent funeral arrangements.

30. William and Auntie Elsie were the sole carers of Peter, GRO-A
GRO-A

When my uncle died, it became very difficult for Elsie to take care of Peter by herself. Elsie had always been a dynamo of energy. But by this point, she was in her eighties, 4'10 in height and suffering from COPD.

31. It is difficult to assess Peter's emotional loss from Williams untimely death from HCV and liver cancer, but it can't have been easy for him.

32. GRO-A

33. My mother and Elsie were very close. They were like sisters. After my uncle died, Elsie became especially dependant on my mother. Last year, my mother died very suddenly. Elsie was inconsolable. I have never seen somebody crumble so quickly. GRO-A
compounded her grief. She just seemed to wilt a little.

34. Elsie was admitted into Hospital after having a fall. By this point, she was suffering from the COPD and type 2 diabetes. Her health deteriorated rapidly and she acquired pneumonia. Auntie Elsie passed away on 20 February 2020.

35. Nevertheless, it doesn't matter what they put it on the death certificate. She had lost William, then GRO-A and suddenly my mother died unexpectedly. The accumulative effects of these grievances within a relatively short space of time, were emotionally too much for her to handle. Having managed to cope with adversity for years, it was as if she had just given up.
36. Witnessing William deteriorate from an illness that was inflicted on him by those instituted to care for him, had been very distressing for my family and I. He always kept himself fit and healthy. He fulfilled his side of the bargain by being a good human being, but through no fault of his own, he was given contaminated blood which led to his untimely death.
37. William was my godfather and my sister's godfather. He has been there all our lives and present for any family event. My family and I have been left without him. I was worried about Auntie Elsie and Peter who had depended on him throughout their lives and were suddenly left alone. My niece and nephew loved him and missed him. William's death was the first loss they have experienced.
38. I am sure the medical treatments William and Elsie experienced over the years diminished their faith in the NHS. This began with the GRO-A They tried to claim compensation but were stonewalled. Secondly, with the circumstances surrounding William's infection with HCV. However, they were both pragmatists. They were always of the belief that you can't change the past, you can only change the future.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

39. Dryburn Hospital has some very good staff but equally, it has some bad staff. Unfortunately, a lot of my experiences at the Hospital have been with the latter. They demolished the old building and built a new Hospital, now known as University Hospital of North Durham. However,

what does not necessarily follow is that the quality of care has improved in all departments.

40. I am confident that the cancer department is excellent and the care William received here was exemplary. I can also not fault the care he received following his accident to get him mobile again with two arms and legs. However, what I do admonish is the lack of communication and candour following William's infection with Hepatitis C.
41. He lived with the virus for several decades and when he was finally diagnosed, it was assumed that he knew already. In fact, the practitioner who informed William of his diagnosis mentioned it only as a throwaway comment. This leads me to question for how long the Hospital were aware of his illness and why this was not communicated to him sooner.
42. He was also told that he would obviously have developed the liver cancer as a consequence of the HCV which he must have contracted through contaminated blood. No explanation or apology accompanied his diagnoses with two devastating illnesses. This lack of candour is regrettably how Dryburn Hospital operates.
43. As mentioned previously, William was hospitalised for sepsis on two separate occasions. Looking back, I wonder why the Hospital didn't do the full gambit of blood tests at this point, or if they did, why they didn't investigate HCV. Why wasn't he involved in a lookback exercise? If he was tested for HCV, why was he neither informed that he was being tested, nor of the results? William's illness and death have left me with many unanswered questions.
44. William never received any treatment for his Hepatitis C. Up until 2010, he was not even aware that he had been infected with the virus. I also do not recall him ever receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

However, his cancer might have progressed to such a stage where treatment would have been redundant.

45. To the best of my knowledge, neither William nor Elsie were offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of the circumstances surrounding his infection with HCV from contaminated blood. Nevertheless, I doubt Elsie or he would have accepted the offer if it was available.

46. I do not believe that William had any problems with other medical professionals, including the dentist, as a result of his diagnosis as there was little time between it and his passing.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

47. I believe that my Auntie Elsie received a letter from Skipton following William's diagnosis with liver cancer and HCV in 2010. She was told that they would be eligible for financial assistance. We applied on 29 September 2010, before he passed away. I do not know if William's medical records were required as a condition of payment. And as far as I am aware, there were no conditions on the financial settlement.

48. In November 2010, William passed away. As far as I am aware, she received a first-stage payment of £20,000. In April 2011, Elsie applied for a second stage payment. This was authorised in April 2011, and she received two sets of £25,000. I do not recall any problems with the application process, it was straightforward.

Section 8. Other Issues

49. I have inherited William and Elsie's pragmatism. The circumstances surrounding my late uncle's illness and untimely death were indeed very unfortunate. However, I like to believe that the 70s' and 80s' were a very different era and that this wouldn't happen again. I have my faith

that the Inquiry exists to prevent the reoccurrence of such a terrible tragedy. We can't change the past but we can change the future.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

09.05.2022