

V1850294

Witness Name: William Meechan

Statement No.: WITN2216001

Exhibits: WITN2216002-005

Dated: 18th January 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF WILLIAM MEECHAN

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

I, William Meechan, will say as follows: -

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is William Meechan. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1944, I am married to my wife Patricia, GRO-C I've been married to Patricia since 1966 and we had two children, Julie and Karen. Julie passed away many years ago. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me and our lives together as a family.

#### Section 2. How Infected

2. I was admitted to Falkirk Royal Infirmary with a burst ulcer on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1979. I believe that I initially received a blood transfusion comprising of three units of blood. I remained in the hospital for about a week. I believe that I received further transfusions because I continued to bleed. It was a normal

recovery and I had no other medical problems afterwards. There was no discussion about the risk of infection. No one knew. This procedure is recorded in my medical notes and I produce it in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2216002**. There is a letter in my medical notes dated 14/09/2017 which states that I received 15 units of blood in 1979. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2216003**.

3. In 2012, I had a heart attack and received three stents as a result. Dr Robinson, my GP, then did a blood test every 6 months to check for things and see how I was going with my recovery. I received a phone call out of the blue saying that there was something in my blood and that she wanted to do another test. Dr Robinson did this and I was surprised when she discovered that I had hepatitis C. She looked back into my medical history and discovered that I had this transfusion in 1979 and this is how the infection had come about.

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They then decided to put me on Harvoni.

5. The information was adequate, it was fine, the Harvoni I was put on was new at the time, I just had to go to the chemist every week and get a box of them and record the times when I took them.
6. I was infected in 1979. I'd had this infection for 35 years but no one had checked me or contacted me, despite the fact that the scandal had made the newspapers. Surely they knew I had the operation, they could have checked before then.
7. **GRO-D**, who is based at Forth Valley Hospital, my opinion of him is very poor. I would never let him treat me, ever again. When I met with him in September 2014, he was more interested about where the blood had come from, than me. He was going to try and check information from the Blood

Transfusion Service to find out where the blood had originated from but it was not listed in the records, which it should have been, he was more interested in himself. There is a letter in my medical notes that refers to this meeting. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2216004**. There is also a letter in my medical notes dated 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 that refers to the treatment I was offered. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2216005**.

8. **GRO-D** attitude was that he was the one who was dealing with the hepatitis C issue and sorting everything out. It left me feeling quite sour towards him and I didn't have too many dealings with him after that, I found him too condescending.
7. When I was diagnosed with bowel cancer, I asked the surgeon to check my records to see if records from Bramley's department were showing that I was clear of the virus, which I was. That is a good example of the lack of information I received. There was no follow-up, no confirmation that it had worked. Had I not been told by my GP and my treating bowel cancer surgeon, I would have not known the beginning or the end of the infection.
8. I was only ever given basic information about hygiene. There was no discussion about any other risks of spreading the infection to others.

### Section 3. Other Infections

9. I am not aware of being infected with any other viruses from the blood.

### Section 4. Consent

10. I am not aware of being treated or tested without my knowledge or consent.
12. When I received the Harvoni, there was no follow-up care and I had to get the results from a different medical professional. It was the bare

minimum of after care. It was a couple of years later when I got these results as I had finished the treatment in 2015. It makes you feel like the doctors didn't really care.

13. I have been treated for the purposes of research but with my knowledge and consent. The nature of the research was in relation to my heart attack and was done by Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. I am not aware of any research being conducted on my in relation to hepatitis C.

#### Section 5. Impact

14. I am a member of the Freemasons so while I'm not able to discuss anything in relation to what I do with the group, I would just say that I wasn't able to do things I wanted to do at meetings and I had to stop some of the activities because of infected blood. I am also an Elder at my church and I hand out communion. I hand out the bread and wine, which I stopped. My reasoning was if any blood came from me onto anyone else, I was worried that I could infect someone so I had to stop. I told the church and it was fine. I really did this because the fear I had of infecting others. There were no mental effects or physical effects from hepatitis C itself otherwise.
15. There have been no further medical complications apart from the bowel cancer which I argue is a result of the treatment. I argue that Harvoni is the reason why I developed bowel cancer and the aneurysm. I was diagnosed with bowel cancer on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and I was told an operation was required. I have been ok and gone into remission however, recently the pains have returned and I have to go for another investigation which I am currently waiting for the results for.
16. I was on Harvoni for 8 weeks, I wrote down the side effects for the pharmacist to record accurate information. I had a stiff right shoulder, a swollen ankle, headaches and diarrhoea. I felt lightheaded and cold at night, my left hip was sore, by the 3rd week of treatment. I had a stiff

neck as well. There is nothing else recorded in the sheet about side-effects.

17. There were no difficulties in accessing treatments, I was put on a schedule, and there were no problems. I believe that I was given the most up-to-date medication that was available.
19. My mother, Mrs Janet Meechan, was alive when I got the blood transfusion, she said that the blood I received was the devils blood, and she has been proven right! I wasn't depressed on Harvoni, I felt ok. The only thing I say is that the Harvoni has caused this cancer and the aneurysm I suffered, but there is no conclusive evidence that I can produce to support this.
20. I've not been to the dentist in a while. There has been no impact on any other treatments for my care. Doctors have to wear gloves and take precautions when they treat me, but this is all fitting with standard practice.
21. My social life was affected with communion going on; I was sad to have to stop participating in this and with altering my activities with the Freemasons. I told management in the Freemasons and since I was a member of management, it was all fine. They are quite supportive.
22. Patricia, my wife, was amazed by my diagnosis, it was a real shock. GRO-C  
GRO-C we don't discuss it much. She tends to keep things to herself.
23. The stigma is there because once you're told you're clear, you're under the impression that you could still give it to someone else so you watch what you do.
24. I've had no problems with financial matters, I've had no issues with life insurance. I've not had to declare it. When I was employed, the company

pension scheme kept me protected which remains the case today, there are no other financial effects from the hepatitis that apply.

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

25. I've never been offered psychological support, I don't really know if it would have helped me though. I feel fine.

#### Section 7. Financial Assistance

26. My GP, Dr Robinson told me to fill in a form for financial support, Mr [GRO-D] should have given me this information but it was Dr Robinson who filled it in. This was submitted and then it was sent back to me and I was told that Mr [GRO-D] had to fill it in. Mr [GRO-D] took one year to fill in that form. Dr Robinson had done it straight away, when I finally received the money, it wasn't backdated. I think this was disgraceful.
27. I am getting £525 a month from SIBSS for life. I have also received £20,000 from the Skipton Fund. I get a reduced rate because Professor Goldberg says that Harvoni wouldn't be the cause of bowel cancer, but there is no evidence that it doesn't in my opinion. I feel it is a case of 'what they don't know'. I'm not a doctor but my argument is, I can't prove it could cause the cancer, but you can't prove it didn't cause it. That's what they're trying to suggest. I have a dwindling trust in the medical profession.
28. The biggest trouble I had was [GRO-D] not completing the form in a timely manner, I think he has done this to save the Government paying out money sooner. I had to chase their department repeatedly, after the original form was rejected, because the GP that did care about me, her opinion was not merited as an enough for SIBSS.
29. There are too many trusts and funds, surely one company can deal with everything. These companies are wasting money, if you have five or six

or seven different charities wasting all this money dealing with all these trusts and funds it just creates problems.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

30. I have no other issues to raise with the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

17/02/2020