

Witness Name: William Montgomery

Statement No.: WITN2220001

Exhibits: NONE

Dated: 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF WILLIAM MONTGOMERY**

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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, William Montgomery, will say as follows:

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

1. My name is William Montgomery. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1962. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am living at home and not working as I am considered disabled. I intend to speak about my infection of hepatitis C which I received after having a blood transfusion. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on myself, my family and our lives together.

## Section 2. How Infected

2. I was involved in a fight on Princes Street, Edinburgh, in 1979, my friend was stabbed over a cigarette. I went to help my friend and three boys set about me and stabbed me. I didn't know they had knives at the time, one ran back after he attacked me and put a knife down the back of my neck. I looked down and I was squirting blood everywhere. I had been wearing a white shirt and it was completely red. This occurred on the August 15<sup>th</sup> 1979. I was unconscious and rushed to hospital at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, based on Lauriston place. I was rushed into the operating room with two punctured lungs, a ruptured liver, kidney and spleen. I was stabbed down the side of my neck, in the groin and in my spine. I lost so much blood on the operating table, at one point I found out that I had lost all my blood and I required a large amount of blood in the form of a transfusion to keep me alive. I was in a coma for about 3 weeks after this, in intensive care. I came around after this and recovered well considering what had happened. I did not know I had had the blood transfusion and found out 9 months later by accident when I went to see a surgeon about my recovery progress. He said to me that I had had lots of blood put into me, as simple as that, and given the injuries I had had I would be lucky to live to the age 30. I don't know the name of the surgeon; he was a liver surgeon based in Aberdeen who was rushed down to Edinburgh to do this operation. I have never fully recovered from this incident. I was a budding singer at the time and I had been signed up to a recording company. I had to give it all up because of the severity of the injury when I was stabbed. This incident has changed everything. Everything I wanted in my life never happened after this. 10 years after the stabbing incident, I went to the City Hospital in Greenbank Edinburgh to get checked up anonymously as I felt there was something wrong with me. AIDS and things were everywhere at the time; I hadn't had anything to do with drugs but I was very concerned so I thought I had better get checked up. The doctors at the City Hospital did test me for HIV and for AIDS and they told me I was ok and sent me away. Later on about 15 years ago, I went to my GP as I was not feeling well. I had gone jaundice. He took blood and it came back saying I had hepatitis C. This was Dr Johnson at Sighthill

Surgery, Calder Road, Edinburgh. He was the GP that told me; me he had tested me for a number of things and it came out from that. When the results first came back, the GP was reluctant to tell me. He advised originally that I had protein in my urine sample and that was all he said, there was an awkward silence and then eventually he said, "*You also have hepatitis C.*" I don't know why he was reluctant to tell me, maybe he thought I would take it badly and be angry with him. I have stress and anxiety so maybe he didn't want me to have an anxiety attack. I had started noticing thread veins in my face, apparently that is part of hepatitis C, it goes to your torso, head arms and I was unfortunate, it spread to my face. Dr Johnson then referred me from what I can recall to, Ward 41 at the Western General Hospital Edinburgh, the Infectious Diseases Unit where I was under the care of Dr Rae.

3. Dr Johnson didn't tell me anything about Hepatitis C. I had to wait to be given information by the hospital. The hospital did explain that basically I had a blood-borne disease and at the time there was no cure for it, but there was medication that I could take. They told me I could take a medication however, I was aware through conversations with other people that this medication could kill me, so I refused for many years. I did latterly take treatment however.
4. Not really, I had to find out information myself about hepatitis C maybe 75% of my information came through the internet.
5. I believe information should have been provided straight away when I was diagnosed and also when I was with the surgeon 9 months after the incident who told me I would not live past age 30, he should have told me about the risk that I had been exposed to and they should have run tests then, all he told me was that I was probably not going to live beyond age 30.
6. It was bad, the GP was reluctant to tell me anything, mind you I never really had a good relationship with Dr Johnson at all. I was given practical

information at the Western General about hepatitis C but the fact that I've had to research this myself on the internet I think is poor.

7. I wasn't given any information, nothing was discussed at all about the risk of giving others this infection.

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

8. I have not received any other direct infections from the infected blood transfusion but I have had further medical complications in relation to the hepatitis C which I discuss in section 5.

### **Section 4. Consent**

9. Yes, the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh knew I had hepatitis C. I went there on two occasions for investigations and on both occasions I was isolated but it was never explained to me why I was being isolated. I was admitted, at one point for 4 weeks, with them trying to find out what was wrong with me. They knew I had the blood transfusion at the end of 1979, but did not further action. This was the City Hospital which was based in the Greenbank, area in Edinburgh.
10. Yes for the same reasons as I discuss above in point 9.
11. Yes I wasn't given full information about the virus or about the risk of being infected.
12. I could have been used for the purposes of research, I don't know, they used to take a lot of samples from me, a lot of blood samples that weren't needed, I think they were trying to work out what was wrong with me, I think.

### **Section 5. Impact**

13. I have memory loss, short term memory loss problems, I have a lot of trouble reading now as well. Now I can find I can read a book twice and not know it. I feel as though I can't do the same things anymore. I used to be able to do a lot physically but now I am incapacitated with my leg, my leg and my hands swell up constantly, I feel unwell all the time with this hepatitis C.
14. I had bronchitis when I was younger, I do believe that the hepatitis has left me with COPD now. I am at a point in my life where I am having a lot of asthma attacks and I am considered high risk. There can be a click of a finger and I am not able to breathe. Nobody has directly said this from the hepatitis C but my immune system was shot for a while because of it and this has contributed to the development of the COPD that I have now. I do receive treatment for this at the asthma clinic at the GP surgery, I am now registered at Murrayfield Practice GP surgery. I have been registered there for about a year, prior to that I was registered at Sighthill medical centre with Dr Johnson and I was with him for many years. I always felt Dr Johnson was holding things back from me, we never had a good relationship ever. Later on he wrote incorrect things about me in my medical records, he assessed that I was a drug user and wrote this in my medical records, he wrote down that when I was 19 years old that I had intravenously taken drugs. I tried to get this removed and took legal advice, I think he has picked me up wrong because I have never used intravenous drugs at all. If I had done there would be further records that would reflect this, further records of track marks and damage to my arms and anywhere else in my body that I would have injected, there would have been a period of time where I would have had to have gone through withdrawal and treatment to get off of intravenous drugs, but this has never occurred, it was completely false. I suffer from stress and anxiety, I have trouble walking now, Dr Johnson has now retired and he has never explained to me why he wrote this statement down in my medical records, I didn't like him and he didn't like me. I have a lot of anxiety and stress as well, I have a scalp disorder which meant I had to have my haircut. I have always had very long hair and when I had to have it cut

off, it was because my body was starting to break down from the hepatitis C. This was extremely upsetting as I really love to keep my hair long. After I was stabbed everything went South.

15. When I was offered treatment for the first time I declined. I was frightened of needles and I didn't want to deal with it and I was scared it would kill me. Last year, I was offered treatment again and I did say yes. I am currently going through this treatment now and I won't know if it is cleared until later on in 2019. When I was offered this treatment last year I was depressed out of my head, I felt dreadful, it is a six-month course, I just feel dreadful just now. I have been through a hard time, it is quite an aggressive treatment and it has taken a lot out of my body, to the point I am having to walk around with a crutch for my left leg, as I no longer have any feeling in my left leg at all. I also have no feeling in my right arm anymore. This is my writing arm which is incredibly upsetting. I feel terrible, I can't write and people have to help me get about, they have to drive me everywhere because I am not fit to. My cousin does my shopping and helps me with the housework, if it wasn't for her I would have to get outsiders or carers to help me. It has mainly been family, mainly my cousins Julia McBride and Shirley Montgomery who have helped me over the years.
16. At one point the treatment involved a lot of needles, I was frightened of the treatment, even after the needles changed to the tablets because I was worried it would kill me. I was referred to a support group at the Western General the first time I was offered treatment and originally, there were 10 of us in the group. It was a group of people going through similar things with the treatment and going through the treatment together so they could support each other through it. I dropped out of this group straight away, thank God I did because I am now the only one alive. Seeing people through the years, I have found out that everyone in the group who went through the original treatment has now passed on.

17. I think I have been offered everything that was available when I was offered treatment.
18. I refused treatment the first time so there were no effects. This last time has been a big impact on my life; the mental effects have been as follows; I have had depression for many years but this has now, been exacerbated by this treatment, I feel sick all the time and I am lying in bed all day. I feel like I cannot move and I require the assistance of others to help me live, otherwise I would need carers. I feel like half a man and that I am just falling apart. I do not even know if the treatment has been successful yet. I won't find out until early course 2019.
19. I have lost quite a lot of my teeth because I have poor gums, I have been told that I have diseased gums and that the recession in my teeth is due to the hepatitis C. Right now I am in-between dentists, my last dentist was based in Corstorphine. Otherwise the treatment from other medical professionals was ok. I wasn't treated differently to anyone else; it was really a case of the normal steps of wearing gloves and so forth when they did check my teeth. The other complication that I had was that I have suffered from Legionnaires' disease. I nearly died a few years ago, when the doctors were trying to help me with this they had trouble finding the right medications and blood to give me because I had hepatitis C. I had lived but other people did die because of this, eventually they did find the right treatment but I have never been the same. This is the point where I started being unable to remember things and now I no longer have any short term memory, but my long term memory is ok.
20. My quality of life is not the same anymore, I don't have a quality of life to say the least. Since getting stabbed, that has had a huge impact on everything and then having hepatitis on top of that, I feel like I have been through too much. I don't know if I am coming or going most of the time, my family who have been worried about it, they don't know what to do. Sometimes I feel like a leper and I think that comes from the stigma of having the illness. There was one point I used to go to a café that I used

to frequent constantly and one of my friends suddenly noticed that it was always the same cup that I was given for my coffee. I confronted the waitress and they denied that they had deliberately given me one cup, however it was known that I had hepatitis C and people were talking about being infected through sharing cups. I split up with my partner because of this as well, we had a boy, Jason Montgomery and a girl, Holly Montgomery together but my partner couldn't handle what was going on with my health. This was before I was diagnosed around 25 years ago when we broke up but my health was declining to the point where she couldn't handle the stress of it all. Jason has been worried about me for many years and is constantly egging me on to take my medication, the same goes for Holly. They are sitting on tenterhooks waiting for the results, as am I, as we have to wait until January or so to get the results if the treatment is working. They are convinced their dad is going to die.

21. People in general, I would say are ignorant, some people don't know that it is fairly difficult to catch hepatitis C from someone else. People seem to believe that even a kiss or something like that would cause them to be infected, they have small minds. I worked in the music business a long time ago and I did try to go back at one point but things were never the same and I was never able to keep up with it again. I used to tire very easily and then everything I wanted to achieve, it wasn't possible the second time. Originally I was a singer and guitarist.
22. There were no educational effects on me.
23. I was a professional singer when I was 20 years old. I haven't worked properly since then, since the stabbing incident. When I recovered I was able to help my uncle Stuart's business, driving cars but my health wasn't well enough to manage it on a full time basis. I was driving cars and shunting cars, he had a garage. I tried doing this for about 4 years or so and then I went onto benefits and I have been on benefits since then.

24. I was signed up with a reputable band and I lost an incredible amount of revenue because of this. I lost my way in life and everything changed. I am not fit enough now to do most jobs and I have terrible problems in my mind, I have a lot of depression and it's been an incredible struggle for me and my family financially. Living a life on benefits is not a luxurious life and has meant there are many opportunities that I will never be able to realise. I have never applied for life insurance or any holiday insurance because I am just declined now everywhere because of my infection.
25. My father has passed away now; my mother is 86 years old, she is still there for me and she believes in me but it's been incredibly upsetting for her, knowing that I have hepatitis C.

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

26. No, when I was stabbed there was not a lot of agencies to help you, you just had to get on with it. There was nothing, I basically had to do everything myself and get on with it, I never had any psychological support then. Counselling was never offered to me when I was diagnosed with hepatitis C either, this is something that in hindsight I feel I would have benefited from as I now have an incredible amount of depression and anxiety which leads to a lot of problems in my everyday life.

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

27. There was talk of financial support through the Skipton Fund. I never went for it initially, I think I applied a year too late for it anyway and was told that I was not eligible. I went for DLA instead; I wasn't made aware of any other financial support. I have never applied for any financial support.
28. I have received nothing from the funds.

29. I feel like when you apply for any support because of this with the DWP, that you are made to feel like less of a person, people seem to act like you want something for nothing, it is that kind of attitude.
30. I believe people should get what they are due; people have had their lives blighted through no fault of their own. The system should help others; I have never received help from anyone. It maybe, I have slipped through the net.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

31. I am under the impression that Thompsons Solicitors are recovering my medical records for which I'll be given a full opportunity to review.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

22/2/2019