

Witness Name: Margaret Wilson

Statement No.: WITN2285001

Exhibits:None

Dated: 29th November 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARGARET WILSON

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

I, Margaret Wilson, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Margaret Wilson. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1936. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am a widow. I intend to speak about my daughter Maria Armour's infection of hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on Maria and our family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Affected

2. Marie had a hysterectomy, when she was in her early 20s, in the early 1980s at a hospital in Glasgow. I think she received the transfusion at the Victoria Hospital, Glasgow but I am not too sure. During the operation, she started to haemorrhage and she was given a blood transfusion. I don't know how many pints of blood she received. I can't remember how I found out about the blood transfusion and I don't know any information about if her consent was sought. I had a blood transfusion, years ago, I know from my own experience that doctors don't ask for consent before giving a patient the blood, they just give the patient what is needed. She was in hospital for a few weeks after the transfusion, but her recovery was ok. Apart from this incident Maria was quite healthy and was not in hospital often.

3. Marie was the life and soul of everything for many years. I do not know if Maria had been unwell just before her diagnosis because she didn't tell me anything like this, she wants to protect me. After she was diagnosed with hepatitis C, it was like I had lost her, she was a totally different person. There are a lot of details about the early treatment and hospitals that I don't know, because Maria tries to keep things from me to stop me worrying. She came to visit me one day and she was crying. She showed me a letter from the hospital where she had just been, I think the letter said that she had hepatitis C. I phoned my eldest daughter, Margaret and asked her to come down to the house, it was heart breaking to see her just so destroyed. I felt like Maria was going to die. Ever since the day she told me she was infected, Maria has been a different person altogether. After that day she just deteriorated completely. She went from being the life of the party to just having no strength and staying at home all the time. She is terrible looking now to tell the truth, she has lost a lot of weight, now, she lives 24 hours a day in constant pain. That day, I will always remember it, there were a lot of tears that day. That letter, that letter took me months to read, I couldn't face it for a long time. I had to blank it out my mind. Maria used

to be a size 10 she's gone right down to a size 6. My heart is completely broken about what has happened to her.

4. When Maria got the transfusion she should have been given information about the risks then, I don't know what else happened when she was diagnosed though. The doctors should have given her the choice, they should have said, this is the blood, do you want it or not, it has these risks. She didn't get the chance to say no.
5. Maria's two daughter's Jade and Laura who were teenagers when Maria found out she was infected, had to go and get tested themselves as well. They were clear. I think Maria was given quite strict advice about how to prevent spreading the infection. If Maria cut herself after she found out, she had to be really careful. They avoided sharing toothbrushes, things like that. I didn't seek out information for myself.
6. I found out that Maria attempted suicide shortly after she was diagnosed. That broke my heart. Years later we had gone to a joint counselling session together and in that session she admitted that she had attempted suicide, because she thought her life was finished. I was stunned.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I know that Maria has fibromyalgia and has come out in horrible lumpy rashes. She is in extreme pain all the time. She is constantly getting flus and colds now and has lost a lot of weight because she doesn't eat anymore. We try and feed her but she doesn't eat much, she used to be a size 10, now she is a size 6.

Section 4. Consent

8. I have no awareness of anything around her treatment and testing before she came into the flat that day with the letter telling me she had

hepatitis C. I do feel though that Maria has been a guinea pig for the hospital. Just look at the state of her, my heart breaks every day when I see her now. I don't know how the individuals who wanted to save money by giving the NHS that blood can sleep at night. Maria's got 3 lovely grandchildren aged, 8, 5 and 2 and she has got no energy for them now.

Section 5. Impact

9. Maria changed completely overnight. She is in constant pain and is seriously depressed. She is too ill to deal with everyday problems and the Council, don't properly support her with housing to help her deal with things that she is simply not well enough to tackle. She has no energy and in a lot of pain so as a result nothing happens. The only time Maria will go out now is if she is in the car with my other daughter. Maria is on inhalers now, she is in constant pain and generally run down.
10. Maria started treatment not long after she was diagnosed. She was warned that she was going to have a hard time on the treatment with the side effects. She was on the treatment for 18 months, and suffered massive mood swings with the treatment. I don't know the name of the drugs, but I think it is a medication that can be considered to be similar to cancer drugs. She had horrible mood swings, and would snap at the least little thing. Nothing bothered her before this. Her hair fell out as well, she has extensions and things now to try and make her hair look thicker. She had no energy and in fact I hardly saw her at all during this period. Liz and Margaret my other two daughters are always with Maria now. I don't know if Maria is clear now from hepatitis, I think she just underwent the one round of treatment.
11. I am not aware of any difficulties in accessing treatment, Maria still goes to the hospital now to get screened and things but I don't know what is going on now. I don't know what treatment she is on or if it is a case of

checking her. Why did it take the NHS so long to find out and tell Maria? What amazes me is that, Maria was great up until then, but since this treatment, she is simply not the same girl.

12. Maria is scared of the dentist. She hasn't had anyone refuse treatment however or treat her differently. She doesn't see the dentist regularly as far as I know.
13. The impact on everyone is horrendous. Maria used to go out all the time and now she sits at home on her own. Her daughter's Laura and Jade have put up with a lot. Little things that would have never have bothered her before now really bother her. We would have to explain to Jade and Laura, that the medication was making their mum different and that she didn't mean the things she said. Laura is very much like Maria, Jade is much more creative and serious in nature. They are different people; it has had a huge impact on them. The family as a whole aren't the same. The girls adore their mum. We will get Maria back again, one day. Sometimes I feel like I am talking about her like she is dead, this is very difficult to talk about. Myself, I feel shattered about it all. When I do though, all it takes is to look at Maria and see what she is going through.
14. I remember the day when a person I know, from the community, stopped me and said "*Is it true, your Maria has got hepatitis c?*" I went "*No no no, there is nothing wrong with her!*" I felt dirty when she spoke like that, but then I thought about it and thought, what am I ashamed for? I have had it said to me twice from people in the community asking about her in relation to the hepatitis. If that is what I think, I can only imagine what Maria is thinking. I don't speak about it with other people, but I think everyone in the neighbourhood knows now. They have all seen the physical change in her. I recently attended a survivors meeting in Glasgow and it really opens your eyes when you see what the Government has done to everyone. People in the neighbourhood now ask after her, but no one will come and say the words 'hepatitis C'. It's a junkie's disease. I remember someone saying to me that I was lucky

as drugs have not entered my family and then for this to happen to Maria....it's just a nightmare; that blood has done this to Maria.

15. Maria went to college and was working in a care home as a social worker/carer before she got ill. She loved it and everyone knew her and thought well of her but then when she fell ill through the treatment so she had to stop and she was never able to return back again. Maria finished college just before she was diagnosed. She had graduated when she was about 40 years old and had a lot of hopes and dreams for the future which has all been destroyed. She is on benefits now and gets support from one of the funds.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

16. Our family take Maria food all the time and try to support her. Liz is a home help and is quite busy at work, but always tries to get up there as much as possible. It is really family help. Emotionally the help comes from the family. No one offered the family counselling or support to help understand and manage Maria's situation. I think that someone should have offered counselling to Laura, Jade and I to help us understand what was going on and help us cope with it. There was a time I didn't believe Maria was going to live for much longer. I lie in bed at night and she is my worry. Jade and Laura were never offered counselling; Jade really needs this support. Laura is always round helping her mum when she can.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

17. I think Maria found out about financial support from Facebook. She made friends through the support groups online and they told her about the support.

18. Maria will receive £18,000 every year for life from the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme. The letter also ensures that Maria can get a mortgage because its £18,000 for life, this will make a huge difference to her. She has also received a grant to wallpaper her flat, she got £1,000 for that but I don't know when that was.
19. The Government have taken a part of her life away, £18,000 will not bring that back.

Section 8. Other Issues

20. The Government should be jailed for what they have done, giving them that blood that came from America, it's absolutely disgraceful, it was just to save them money. Look at the lives its cost, the misery its left the families with.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 9/7/19