Witness Name: Ishbel Catriona Cruickshank
Statement No.: WITN3100001
Exhibits: None
Dated: 10th October, 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ISHBEL CATRIONA CRUICKSHANK

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27th June 2019.

I, Ishbel Catriona Cruickshank, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Ishbel Catriona Cruikshank. My date of birth is GRO-C 1951. I am a retired head teacher. I am married to Norman Cruickshank and we have been married for over forty six years. I intend to speak about my son Neil Cruickshank and my experience of him becoming infected with hepatitis C. In particular the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment he received and the impact it had on our family.

Section 2. How Affected

2. Neil is our only child. Neil is very much loved and we have tried all his life to support him emotionally and financially.

3. Neil was born on the GRO-C 1977 at Peterhead Maternity Hospital.

4. When Neil was about six weeks old, I was at home carrying him and a door opened and softly banged into Neil's head when he was in my arms. Neil developed a haematoma on his head. I took him to my local GP, Dr Manson, at Peterhead surgery. Dr Manson got me an outpatient appointment at Aberdeen Royal infirmary. We saw a consultant by the name of Mr Davidson. He surgically aspirated the haematoma on Neil's head and told me that it was full of blood. They kept Neil in hospital for a few days. A few days later I returned to pick up Neil and spoke to another consultant Professor Campbell. He told me that Neil had severe haemophilia A. I was aware of the condition as I had once worked in my local primary school and taught a young boy with haemophilia.

5. I was not aware of haemophilia running in our family. I thought it must have been a spontaneous mutation until my mother told me that her auntie's son had died because of haemophilia.

6. Neil was under the care of a consultant called Audrey Dawson at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. As he was growing up he had routine appointments every six months. I would also take him in, if he had a bleed, if his joints were swollen or he wasn't weight-bearing. He would always receive Factor VIII which would be administered to him on instruction of Dr Bennet or Dr Dawson.

7. When Neil was five years old he started primary school. I decided I wanted to go back to work as a supply teacher. For a few months Neil and I would go to the Haematology Department and I would be supervised to give Neil his Factor VIII. The aim was to make me competent enough to administer Factor VIII myself to Neil at home. Eventually I was allowed to do this. I kept the Factor VIII in the fridge at home and administered it when Neil needed it. I had to make a record of how many units I administered, I did not record the batch numbers that I was given though. The batch numbers that were given to me were kept

at the hospital.

8. Neil received Factor VIII on a regular basis from a baby. On one of these occasions he was given contaminated blood and contracted hepatitis C.

9. At no time was I ever told that there was a risk of Neil being given contaminated blood. I trusted the doctors and believed they were doing everything in their power and knowledge to do their best for Neil. At no time was I advised that there was even a possibility that Neil could be given contaminated blood.

10. When Neil was about twelve or thirteen years old around 1989/1990, his school was taking the kids on a school holiday to Aviemore. Neil wasn't allowed to go as the risk of Neil having bleeds was too great for the school. Neil was very disappointed as he just wanted to be a normal boy, so I started a holiday group for children with haemophilia.

11. I would take a group of children away every year on holiday. It became very popular and grew in size. It was decided that we needed a doctor with us on our trips. A registrar from Edinburgh Royal Infirmary called Dr Henry Watson started to come with us. I remember on one occasion whilst on holiday with the children, Dr Watson asked me, "*what are they doing about the hepatitis C in Aberdeen*?" I asked him what he meant and he looked over at the boys and said "*they've all been infected.*" I had no idea what he meant by this and I didn't really know what hepatitis C was. The boys were all treating themselves on holiday with Factor VIII or Dr Henry Watson would inject them with Factor VIII if needed.

12. When we got back from the holiday I took Neil up to the Haematology Department at Aberdeen Infirmary. We saw Dr Dawson and I asked for Neil to be tested for hepatitis C. The next time Neil and I attended the clinic she told us that Neil did in fact, have hepatitis C. **GRO-D** **GRO-D** I thought it was just a virus and not that serious. She did say there was no treatment for it then

but it was more serious not to treat bleeds.

13. I was not provided with any information about hepatitis C. Unknown to us, he had been tested but we were not informed.

14. I was given no information about the infection at all let alone how to understand or manage Neil's infection. I do believe that we should have been given information about the fact that the infection could be passed onto others. GRO-D GRO-D GRO-D at the time I wasn't overly concerned.

15. When I look back it was obvious that haemophiliacs were being given contaminated blood. Obviously, because Dr Henry Watson told me on one of the holidays. It was him that prompted me to get Neil tested. They obviously knew that haemophiliacs were getting contaminated blood but didn't say anything.

16. When Dr Dawson told Neil he had hepatitis C I know this was a very traumatic time for him. I remember there was a lot of coverage on the media about haemophiliacs getting HIV from being given contaminated blood. Everyone knew that having HIV was a death sentence. I think Neil thought he would get it too. It was at this point that Neil's mental health was affected.

Section3. Other Infections

17. When Neil was about fifteen years old, he received a letter from Aberdeen Royal Infirmary informing him that he was at risk of having Variant CJD from an infected batch of blood. I wasn't particularly worried at this time, as he had no symptoms. I know Neil read about it, but I just thought he had enough on his plate with the haemophilia and hepatitis C.

Section 4. Other Infections

18. I didn't realise this for a long time, but now I do believe that Neil was tested without his knowledge or consent. As a haemophiliac Neil would always have his blood taken. Neil has had access to his medical records and it would seem he was tested in 1986 for HIV. I certainly did not know they were testing my son for this deadly infection. I know that Neil was not aware of it either. I have no idea if Neil's blood was ever taken for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

19. For Neil to be told at thirteen years old that he had contracted hepatitis C was very hard for him. Physically he suffered anyway with severe haemophilia. It is therefore difficult to say if he suffered physically because of the hepatitis. He did seem more tired than other children of his age, but I just put that down to his haemophilia. Mentally it affected Neil enormously. He seemed to change to a different boy. He was always worried he would get AIDS as well. He would panic about little things and make a mountain out of a mole hill. He was a constant worrier and was always worried about getting other infections. He would try and avoid taking his Factor VIII because he was so worried about the possibility of contracting AIDS. Neil quite simply became a very angry boy. Little did I know back then, how much Neil's mental health would go downhill when he went to university.

20. In 1995 Neil left home to attend Aberdeen University. He was living in the halls of residence where his mental health continued to deteriorate. He didn't take well to university and became quite reclusive. I remember I was very worried about him. He didn't contact me for weeks. I remember I asked another haemophiliac boy I knew at the University, to go round and check on him. I also remember Neil and I went to see Dr Dawson at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary to discuss his mental health. Dr Dawson put his condition down to stress.

21. Shortly after this Dr Audrey Dawson retired in 1996 and ironically the doctor who had first alerted me to hepatitis C, Dr Henry Watson, took over the position.

22. In 1997 when Neil was in his second year of university, he had an operation on his ankle. He was getting constant bleeds in his ankle. He was kept in hospital twice for a period as his wound wouldn't heal. There was never any issues around his hepatitis C though.

23. In 1999/2000 Neil told me that he had been offered a new treatment for his hepatitis C. He said it was called interferon and was a six-month course. I remember he did say that he had been told the treatment did have quite severe side-effects. Whilst Neil was on the treatment I would see him once a week. His physical and mental health suffered severely.

24. Physically Neil looked very ill. He lost a lot of weight and told me he couldn't sleep although he was extremely fatigued.

25. I don't believe that Neil faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing the treatment he received. In hindsight, I wish he had because his mental health really suffered and he started getting psychotic episodes.

26. As far as I am aware, Neil did not develop any further medical complications or conditions resulting from the hepatitis C.

27. While Neil was on the treatment I received a phone call from **GRO-C** in Edinburgh at 5am in the morning. I went to pick Neil up at **GRO-C** **GRO-C** physically, he was in a terrible state. He had oil all over his hair and was very dirty and scruffy. He was wearing a kilt and just looked ridiculous. Neil had crashed his car on the Forth Road Bridge **GRO-C**

GRO-C

It was assumed that Neil must have been taking drugs because of his erratic behaviour. This was not the case, it was the interferon he was taking that was causing his erratic behaviour. Nevertheless, he GRO-C GRO-C had to give up his mobility car, which devastated him.

28. After this incident, I contacted Dr Watson who told me that Neil would have to come off the treatment. I know he referred Neil to a psychiatrist but by the time his appointment came through, Neil had managed to pull himself around so they just said he was fine.

29. The interferon totally altered Neil's personality. Every couple of years he would have a major psychotic episode. He would drink heavily in a way to self-medicate. He would smash holes in the walls of his home. He would erratically spend money he didn't have. My husband and I would often have to help Neil out financially. We paid the mortgage on Neil's flat as he was unable to do so.

30. Even when Neil stopped the treatment mentally he was never the same. Again in 2013 I remember Neil and his girlfriend went on a weekend away with the Haemophilia Society. They went to a caravan park somewhere just outside of Edinburgh. I do not know the details of what happened other than Neil had another psychotic episode and was asked to leave the caravan park. I know that Neil and his girlfriend then booked into a hotel in Glasgow. I don't know exactly what happened but I remember I received a phone call to say he was in Parkhead Psychiatric Hospital in Glasgow. Neil was kept in the hospital for about two weeks.

31. I do not know if Neil's infected status impacted upon his treatment for any other medical or dental conditions.

32. The impact of discovering our son had haemophilia was bad enough, so to discover our son had been given contaminated blood and had contracted hepatitis C was devastating for my husband and I. GRO-C GRO-C from this and he still suffers from this to

this day.

33. The family were very much aware of the stigma that was associated with hepatitis C and HIV. Neil in particular didn't tell anyone that he had the infection. Neil did have a few girlfriends, I don't know if he told them about his infected status though. Neil didn't like telling anyone he had haemophilia let alone hepatitis C.

34. Hepatitis C did impact on my son's education. He had to leave university in his second year due to his haemophilia but also because of his mental health, which was because of hepatitis C. As a result Neil has never had a full-time paid job. He has spent his entire life on benefits and my husband and I have helped Neil out financially as best we can.

Section 6. Treatment care support

35. Neil was never offered any counselling or psychological support. I think it may have helped him if he had. From being thirteen years old, he was constantly worried that he would develop HIV and possibly have Variant CJD. Both of which are death sentences. This was a lot for Neil to deal with at thirteen.

36. As a family we were never offered any counselling or psychological support. At the time I found out Neil had hepatitis C it was very much played down and I was left with the impression that it was just an infection that would clear. I certainly didn't know it was a life-threatening condition.

Section 7. Financial assistance

37. When Neil was in his early twenties, he received a lump sum of £20,000. I don't really know where he got this money from. I believe it was from a fund responsible for compensating people who have been infected with contaminated blood. I know Neil had to fill a form in and take it to Dr

Henry Watson for him to endorse the application.

38. Over the years I have been in contact with Dan Farthing who is the head of Haemophilia Scotland. In 2018 he informed Neil and I, that Neil was entitled to more financial assistance from the Scottish Government. I had read about it through a haemophilia magazine and had contacted him about it. Dan sent the forms to Neil for him to fill in. I remember there was a deadline for the forms to be completed and Neil hadn't done it. He came over to mine and we filled in the form together. It was a self-assessment to say how having hepatitis C had affected his life. I seem to remember it was fairly straightforward and we sent it off.

39. Neil received a lump sum of £30,000 and a monthly allowance. This has enabled Neil to pay his own mortgage and has eased the burden on my husband and me.

Section 8. Other issues

40. I do not wish to be anonymous for this statement.

*

NOT RELEVANT

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 14/2/20