

Witness Name: Sarah-Jane Hickling

Statement No: WITN3301001

Exhibit: N/A

Dated: 14 October 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SARAH-JANE HICKLING

I, Sarah-Jane Hickling (nee Northwood) make this statement to assist the Infected Blood Inquiry in relation to its investigation arising out of the tragic circumstances of the death of my late father; Gary Northwood.

Section 1: Introduction

1. I am the daughter of Gary Northwood born on GRO-C 1945.
2. My father was a Haemophiliac who tragically succumbed to the effects of both HIV and Hepatitis C infections on the GRO-C 2010 having suffered from liver cancer.

Section 2: How Affected

3. My father received contaminated Factor VIII concentrates for his Haemophilia A condition with a Factor VIII level of less than 1%. He regularly required Factor VIII concentrates in relation to spontaneous bleeds and traumas.
4. My father was diagnosed with the HIV infection on the GRO-C 1985.
5. I witnessed the effects associated with both HIV and Hepatitis C from a very young age. I was only 2 years old when he was diagnosed with HIV and endured the pain of losing my much-loved father at the age of 27.

6. I was born in 1982 and my brother born in 1985. I was diagnosed as a carrier of Haemophilia A, aged 6. However I was not diagnosed at birth for Haemophilia and my mother confirms that there were no precautions taken at the time of my birth.
7. Furthermore, I have a son who was diagnosed with severe Haemophilia A, aged 2, (the same factor level as his grandad).

Section 3: Other Infections

N/A

Section 4: Consent

8. I do not believe that my parents were ever fully informed as to the risks associated with any of the treatment undertaken by my dad.

Section 5: Impact

9. Sadly, I lost out on the continued support, care and assistance of my father who would have been of great assistance throughout my life and in achievement of my full potential and creative development. The supervision and assistance of a parent has a considerable value and is a loss that shapes a personality and opportunities in life.
10. I remember having a very protective upbringing as my parents had been told they could not have children, so it was a miracle when I was born.
11. My father was always extremely careful about his treatment at home and I was never allowed to be anywhere around him when he was administering it. He would get extremely angry, fearful and anxious if I was ever close at that time and during this period I did not know why he was like this towards me.

12. My brother and I were never told about his HIV status until he was diagnosed with Cancer in 2010. My parents decided to keep it to themselves to protect their children from the stigma and discrimination that was rampant at the time. I recall being in shock and completely amazed that my parents could live with the secret for such a long time. My father was scared that we would treat him differently which my brother and I could never do as we both shared a close bond.
13. Naturally, it would be upsetting for any child to be told to go away and shouted at and as I was so young I did not understand why he was like this towards me.
14. As my father's condition got worse and he became depressed, as a family we stopped doing further activities together. The realisation that I could not do things with my father that other Dads could do was unsettling.
15. As a child I had feelings that my dad was amazing at how he done things differently to other dads. He would still try his hardest to give us a normal childhood and try to do activities with us. He taught me how to swim and ride a bike but could not swim with me or ride a bike with me like other dads.
16. I have vivid memories of the devastating news of my father's diagnosis. I was unable to share any time together or support him after the news as he was admitted to hospital on GRO-C 2010 and sadly died three weeks later.
17. There have been so many overwhelming times such as my brother's wedding and indeed my own where no words can describe the sadness and loss our family felt.
18. I lost out on having my father to walk me down the aisle and so when I asked my brother to walk me, he initially refused and this in itself was also very upsetting for me. This is one of the most important and memorable days in one's life, but one which was overshadowed by the sadness and loss of my father.

19. I now have a 4 year old son who has severe Haemophilia A, same as his grandad. He has a port-a-cath in his chest to give him treatment of Factor VIII. There have been many occasions since the birth of my son that the I wished my father was still here, not only to see his grandchildren grow but to give me some words of wisdom to manage my son's condition.

20. I feel that I have lost out on that advice that my father could have offered me in managing my son's condition and what he could have offered my son when he was a bit older.

21. The impact this loss has had on my emotional wellbeing and health has been immense. It has greatly impacted me professionally and creatively.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

22. I did not have any counselling after my dad's death, but I had the support of my family as we are very close to lean on each other to get through an extremely devastating time.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

N/A

Section 8: Other Issues

N/A

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Sarah-Jane Hickling

Dated 17/10/2021