

Witness Name: Audrey Brook

Statement No: WITN3393001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF AUDREY BROOK

I, Audrey Brook will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Audrey Brook. I was born on the GRO-C 1950 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C Yorkshire, GRO-C
2. I am married and have 3 daughters and 6 grandchildren. I am semi-retired and currently have a part-time job.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Infected

4. In or about February 1984, I became very ill and as a result I passed out. I was therefore taken to the Dewsbury Moorlands Hospital (DMH) and I was told that I had a perforated ulcer in my stomach. I required a blood transfusion as I had lost 6 pints of blood. I required the blood transfusion as an emergency.

5. As stated above, I was treated at DMH. I do not know the name of the consultant who performed the operation, but after the operation I was under the care of Mr Lindon who was a consultant at the hospital.
6. As a result of the blood transfusion, I was infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C). I did not find out I was infected until 1996 when I donated blood at a blood bank centre in Leeds. Approximately 2 weeks after donating blood, I received a straight forward letter from them stating I had Hep C and that I needed to see them immediately.
7. I had a vigorous interview and I was asked very personal questions such as how many sexual partners I had. GRO-C
GRO-C. They asked me if I ever used needles or taken drugs which I haven't. I was then told that it was a very likely that the blood transfusion I had in 1984 infected me with Hep C as there was no other way I could have been infected.
8. A couple of months later in October 1996, they referred me to Dr GRO-D, who was the main liver consultant at St James' Hospital in Leeds (STH). He tested me again for Hep C and the results came back positive but he said my liver was quite normal so the Hep C had not affected me too much at that point.
9. I was not given any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infections from the blood transfusion.
10. I was not provided with any information whatsoever about the infection. Dr GRO-D asked me if I knew anything about Hep C and I told him I didn't and that I only associated it with jaundice. I didn't know what Hep C could do to me at that point.
11. I believe I was not given adequate information to help me understand and manage the infection. I was only given leaflets and I don't think that provided me with much information.

12. I believe information should have been provided to me earlier but I never asked them and no one told me. Once I realised the effects of the Hep C and questioned the doctor, it was explained quite well to me but it was too late by then really.

13. I was told about the risk of my husband being infected through me and so he was tested straight away and fortunately, he was clear.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. In or about 2002, I was told that the Hep C was dormant. However, I became quite ill at that time and I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. I was constantly ill and vomiting. This disease usually runs in families to my knowledge, but in my case it did not. Having been diagnosed at 52 years old, the consultant told me it was very unusual to have Crohn's disease as it is called the 'young person's disease' and he was a little concerned how I got it. He believed that it was probably down to some trauma in my life e.g. immune suppressants given for a condition such as Hep C. I believe that the Crohn's disease was caused as a result of the Hep C.

Section 4. Consent

15. I believe I was treated with my knowledge and with my husband's consent for the blood transfusion as I required it as an emergency.

16. However, I believe I was treated and tested without being given adequate or full information. I wasn't sure what was happening and I don't think my husband was given adequate information about possible risks associated with a blood transfusion.

17. I believe it is possible that I was tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

18. I have suffered from physical effects as a result of the Hep C. Sometimes I feel spurts of energy and then suddenly I feel very exhausted and have bouts of fatigue. It just over powers me. I now suffer from general aches and pains.

19. I have also suffered from mental effects as a result of the Hep C. It was always at the back of my mind that I had to be careful not to infect others, especially as I was working with children. No one knew about my infection other than my family and my best friend. I have been living with Hep C in body for 36 years now. I wouldn't even say that I am clear of it, but it is just laying dormant in my system.
20. As previously mentioned, as a result of the Hep C, I now suffer from Crohn's disease. I also suffer from arthritis and I believe it was as a result of the infection.
21. Soon after I was diagnosed I was given Interferon to treat the Hep C. I used to inject myself 2-3 times a week and attend the clinic once a month for blood tests to see if the treatment was working. I had many tests and biopsies during this period. During the treatment, I felt very exhausted all the time. The treatment cleared the Hep C. In 2001, I got a letter stating that my liver functions were normal and the Hep C was dormant.
22. The Hep C has impacted on my private, family and social life. I was always very careful if I needed any treatment for injuries. It was always playing on my mind that I could infect someone else. Thinking about it gets me down into a depressive state and so I tried not to think about it. I didn't let it get me down in anyway. My daughters and my husband knew about the infection. They were concerned and sometimes they would attend appointments with me. However, I didn't want them to think I was unduly worried and so they got on with it just like I did.
23. I have learnt to live with the stigma attached to the Hep C. At the time, I worked in a school. I knew not to let anyone touch me if I had an injury so I was in a dilemma whether to tell the head teacher about the infection or not. I also needed to take time off work to attend hospital appointments every month. I decided not to tell her that I had Hep C and instead I just told her I had a blood disorder. I felt guilty when I told her as I was working with children. I informed my best friend who worked with me so that if I was ever

injured, she knew to treat me by wearing gloves. It affected me so much and I have not told anyone else.

24. When I asked the head teacher to have a day off each month, she didn't have a problem with it and agreed. She didn't ask any questions either. Had I worked somewhere else I believe the infection would have caused me massive work-related effects because of the stigma that was attached to it.

25. I didn't face huge financial effects as such but I had to pay for train fares to Leeds every month, when I was having treatment.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

26. I didn't face any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support as a result of being infected with Hep C.

27. I was not provided with any counselling or psychological support. I was just given leaflets to read. Looking back now, I believe it would have helped if the support was offered to me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I have not received any financial assistance from any of the trusts or funds that were set up.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

29. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

30. I do not wish to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-C

Dated 13.7.19