Witness Name: Allan Pepper
Statement No: WITN1463001
Exhibits: WITN1463002
WITN1463003
WITN1463004
WITN1463005
Dated: February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALLAN PEPPER

I, Allan Pepper will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Allan Pepper. I was born on GRO-C 1963 and live at GRO-C GRO-C Surrey GRO-C

2. I am currently self-employed and have my own book selling business on Amazon, as well as selling golf equipment on Ebay.

3. I suffered from Hepatitis C as a result of being infected by contaminated blood products. This led to Cirrhosis and subsequently to liver cancer.

4. This witness statement has been prepared with the benefit of access to some of my medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are exhibited to this statement.

Section 2. How infected

5. I was diagnosed with mild Hemophilia A when I was 6 years old following a Tonsillectomy at Lewisham Hospital. I was diagnosed by Dr Whitmore.

6. Growing up with Hemophilia was very difficult and I felt like I was wrapped in cotton wool during my teenage years. I enjoyed playing contact sport; however, I had to stop playing football after the age of 11. I was also banned from playing rugby and cricket after secondary school. The only sport I could play was golf as it was a less dangerous sport.

7. There was one time when I was playing football and I accidentally knelt on a piece of glass which cut my knee, this took a while to heal. Although my Haemophilia was not completely life-changing, it was definitely, to some extent, life-altering.

8. This condition was something that was always on the back of my mind. Even when we went on holiday, my parents would bring Factor VIII in case I had a bleed.

9. From what I can recall, I first received Factor VIII in 1977 when I was 14 years old at Lewisham hospital. Prior to that, I received Cryoprecipitate. I was treated by Dr Whitmore at Lewisham Hospital. He was my main doctor who looked after my treatment since I was 6 years old.

10. I only received Factor VIII on and off, as and when I needed it. I had Factor VIII at home but never had to use it other than at the hospital. In 1987, I slipped on some stairs and hit my head at Waterloo Station. I remember going to the hospital and receiving Factor VIII for this.

11. In 2010, I was to have a nose operation at Princess Royal University Hospital. My consultant was not aware that I was a Haemophiliac so referred me to Dr Anil Lakhani in the Haematology Department, where I was seen on numerous occasions and I had blood tests. I was not sure what the tests were for, I

assumed they were for my Haemophilia. However, I now know that I was being tested for the Hepatitis C virus (HCV).

12. I was totally oblivious that I had this virus in my body. I remember suffering from insomnia and extreme tiredness around this time; however, I did not think anything of it. During this time, I was still under the care of Lewisham Hospital; I was recommended herbal remedies which did not work.

13. Sometime during August 2010, Dr Lakhani told me that I had Hepatitis C. He was very good, he sat me down and explained what the HCV was, and that he was 98% certain that I got it from infected blood products. At the time he worked very close with St Thomas' Haemophilia Department and he referred me there.

14. I asked Dr Lakhani about long term consequences and proposed treatment, and he gave me a great overview and told me to speak to the consultant at St Thomas' Hospital as well.

15. I was seen by consultant Dr Terry Wong, on 16 September 2010. Please see exhibit WITN1463002. Dr Wong was very frank and made it clear that I had to start treatment for my HCV straightaway, otherwise I would die.

16. Following a fibroscan which showed I had Cirrhosis, I started a course of treatment which consisted of Ribavirin and Pegylated Interferon in November 2010. The treatment lasted for 24 weeks and caused me to experience horrible side effects. I was told that the treatment had successfully cleared my HCV.

17. In October 2011, I was told I had relapsed and that the HCV had come back. I then received the same course of treatment for another 48 weeks at King's Hospital, London. I have enclosed a copy of this letter as WITN1463003. Once again I was informed that the treatment was successful and that I was clear of the HCV for the second time.

18. During the start of 2013, I was advised by Dr Wong that he will be referring me to King's College Hospital liver department for specialist treatment . At this point I was under the impression that I was clear of the HCV and I had no idea that he was keeping an eye on my liver and testing me for this. However, this was not the case, I had further tests and I was told I had significant lesions on my liver by Dr Suddle at Kings College Hospital. Dr Suddle reassured me and recommended I undergo a liver transplant at Kings College Hospital since they have a specific protocol for liver transplant in Haemophiliacs which has been successfully carried out on a number of patients. Please see exhibit WITN1463004. I consented to this procedure and I was put onto the liver transplant list.

19. In late March 2013, I had a TACE procedure at Kings Hospital in order to slow down the growth of my liver lesions. Unfortunately, around the same time, my HCV also came back and I had to have further treatment until August 2013 when I had my liver transplant. Luckily, the transplant was successful and this time cleared my HCV for good. I have been given a 5 year all clear in September 2018 for my cancer, and my liver is regularly tested to make sure I am still free from the HCV.

Section 3. Other Infections

20. As a result of being infected with Hepatitis C, I had also suffered from Cirrhosis which led to liver cancer.

Section 4. Consent

21. I do not know whether I was treated or tested without my knowledge and consent.

22. I believe I was provided adequate information regarding my Hepatitis C as mentioned above by Dr Anil Lakhani.

23. I do not know whether I was tested for the purposes of research. However, I did at some point ask at St Thomas' Hospital whether I should be tested for HIV and was told that I had already been tested for this, and that the results were negative. This was without my consent as I was not even made aware.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

24. The HCV has had a huge effect on my life. Between 2010 and 2013, I went through a lot of emotional and physical distress. I was in a constant fog at the time and I did not want to do anything or speak to anyone. My family went to Egypt on holiday during this time, however, I could not go with them which left me feeling excluded and isolated.

25. I felt like I had a chunk of my life taken away. I lost a number of years where I was incapable of doing anything. For about 3 years all I was doing was going to the hospital constantly. The recovery from the transplant also took a while which was far longer than I though it would.

26. I still have the fear and uncertainty of not knowing whether my conditions could reappear, even though I have had a 5 year clear, you never know what the long term consequences could be of the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. There is no reason why the HCV cannot return again and, this does upset me occasionally when I think about it.

27. My wife and children have been very supportive following my diagnosis. If it was not for them, I would have struggled to remain positive. GRO-C was tested in 2010 for infections and thankfully the results were negative. It was a huge relief for me because if I had infected GRO-C I would have felt very culpable.

28. I also confided in a few of my good friends about my condition and they were supportive. I was lucky enough not to experience any negativity or stigma attached to my conditions.

29. As mentioned above, the treatment I received consisted of Ribavirin and Interferon, which had many side effects. I was constantly tired and I had no energy to do anything with my family. I experienced on-going flu like symptoms and on some days, I had mood swings which put a strain on my relationship with my family. The treatment was horrible, but I did not have any obstacles in finding treatment.

30. Prior to my diagnosis, I was a sales director at a golf travel company with 6 people working for me. I remember suffering from severe tiredness and insomnia without knowing the cause and, as a result, I was unable to carry out my role properly

31. In 2009, this company shut down, and so I went to work for another company in Essex in 2010. I was employed here as a sales manager and I had to travel 40 miles each way to get to work. However, it was during this time that I was diagnosed with the HCV and I was due to start treatment. I had to leave this job as It would be impossible for me to carry on working whilst on-going a course of intense treatment. My company owner was quite supportive, although I am sure he was also annoyed as he had just recruited me, and couple of months in, I had to resign. If it was not for the infection, I would have kept this job. My job was salary & commission based, so I know if had I carried on working, I would have earned a considerable sum there by now. My infection has had a massive impact on me financially.

32. My family are very supportive of me and have helped me through this hard time. My wife and I would have discussions regularly about how she thinks it is so unfair that someone else had put an infection into my body and cause all of these problems.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

33. I did not face any difficulties in getting the treatment that was recommended to me.

34. I have been offered various counselling, but I decided not to attend. I am not a very good talker and I would rather deal with my problems myself. I am a very positive person, and I was very positive during treatment as well.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

35. I received 2 lump sums from the Skipton Fund. The first was the stage 1 payment of £20,000 in 2010, and as far as I can remember, the second was the stage 2 payment for £50,000 in 2011.

36. I was expecting a lot of trouble applying for this financial assistance, but it turned out to be hassle-free. St Thomas' Hospital made me aware of the Skipton Fund, and then I applied by filling in some forms. The overall process took no longer than 1 month. Dr Bevan, from St Thomas' Hospital wrote to the Hemophilia Centre at Lewisham Hospital in relation to any records they had regarding my Factor VIII treatment in the early 1980's. He also stated that I had Hepatitis C almost certainly acquired from a product at that time. Please see exhibit WITN1463005.

37. My Fibroscan results were clear that I had Hepatitis C and so I think that is why it was easy for me to get my payments.

38. I also receive monthly payments of £1,500, as well as assistance with winter fuel.

39. I did not apply for IEBSS as I did not think I would be eligible as I am self-employed.

Section 8. Other Issues

40. In the past, I have had life insurance, but when this had expired, I was told that I cannot receive life insurance anymore given my health condition.

41. I believe I am one of the lucky ones as I actually made it this far, whereas others who were impacted by the same scandal went through so much more and lost their loved ones.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

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

43. I am happy to give oral evidence if necessary.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed...... GRO-C ....

Dated........27/2/19..................................