

Witness Name: B SAMUELS

Statement No: WITN1503001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: August 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BEVERLEY SAMUELS

I, BEVERLEY SAMUELS will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Beverley Samuels of GRO-C
GRO-C. My date of birth is GRO-C 1972. I am single and have no children. I currently work as a PPI case handler for HSBC.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late father, Beresford Augustus Samuels, who was born on GRO-C 1941 and who passed away on 5 October 1993 from full blown AIDS. As a result of receiving contaminated blood, my father was infected with HIV.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical records.

Section 2. How infected

4. My father suffered from stomach ulcers. In or around 1984, he was treated for a burst stomach ulcer at Middlesex Hospital and in the course of that treatment was given a blood transfusion. I believe it was that blood

transfusion that caused the HIV infection, however I do not know if he had any other transfusions during that time period or thereafter.

5. My dad never told me or my sister about his HIV infection, and until the final month of his life when he was very ill and in hospital, neither of us knew anything about it.
6. It was the doctor at the hospital who informed us that our father was dying from AIDS. He also told us that our father had contracted HIV from the blood transfusion at Middlesex Hospital around 1984. By that point my dad was too far gone so I never had the opportunity to discuss his infection with him; I do not know when he was tested or informed about HIV or what information or advice, if any, he received after being diagnosed.
7. After my father's death, with the help of my godmother, who was a solicitor at the time (now retired), we were able to obtain information from the government which confirmed that the blood given to my father had been imported from the USA.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. Aside from HIV, I do not believe my father suffered from any other infections, but I cannot be sure.

Section 4. Consent

9. I do not know if my dad provided consent to testing and treatment.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

10. My parents split up when I was very young. My sister and I went to live with my father when I was 10 years old and she was 11 years old. I lived with my father until he passed away. I was 21 years old when he died.

11. We lived with him and he was a good parent, but he wasn't emotional and he wasn't very close to us. I think it was difficult for my dad to be close to us because of his illness and shame relating to the diseases.
12. My sister and I knew our father wasn't well. He told us about his stomach ulcers but he never told us that he had HIV. HIV was a terrible thing back then, there was a lot of stigma surrounding it; I think he must have felt too ashamed to talk about it.
13. My dad was a welder and he worked very hard. For as long as I can remember, he went to work, apart from when he was ill. I did not know that my father was infected with HIV until just before his death. I knew he was at the hospital a lot and I always assumed it was because of his stomach ulcers.
14. For years I sensed something was seriously wrong with him, and that there was something he was not telling us, but I did not know what it could be. I now know that he would have been dealing with the effects of HIV, HIV treatment and eventually AIDS. He experienced mood swings and was quite difficult to put up with at times. This may have been because of his illness, or his medication.
15. I remember my dad taking a lot of medication; in hindsight, I assume he received treatment for HIV but I do not know this for sure and I do not know what treatment he received. Whatever it was he was treated with, I don't think it was effective because he ended up developing AIDS and dying from this illness.
16. Prior to his passing, my dad spent most of his time at his partner's house whilst I was in his home on my own. His partner looked after him and I was therefore shielded from a lot of what he must have been going through.
17. I believe he continued to work until a few months before his death, but I do not know exactly when he stopped working.

18. Towards the end of his life his health drastically deteriorated and he lost a lot of weight. When I visited my dad at his partner's house, I would find him bed ridden, incredibly weak and unable to move.
19. His condition got worse and worse and eventually he was admitted to Middlesex Hospital. He didn't know what was going on around him. He was conscious but had his eyes closed. He could sort of make out people in the room, but he was unable to communicate or think. He lost his mobility completely.
20. In the hospital, the doctor told my sister and I that my father was suffering from AIDS. I cannot remember the name of the doctor. I was in a daze; it was such a shock as we never even knew that he had HIV.
21. A few weeks after this my father passed away from AIDS.
22. My dad's illness and death really affected me. I was only 21 years old when he died. I understood why he kept his illness from us but I felt guilty for not knowing what he was going through and what he had to live with.
23. For years, I lived in fear I would contract HIV myself. It wasn't logical but that was how I felt. I suppose I was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. I felt that if it could happen to my father it could also happen to me. Even now, when I think about what happened it still upsets me, I don't think it is something you get over easily.
24. Had my father not been infected, and had he still been alive, I probably would have had a different life.
25. At the time he died I was 21 years old. I lived at home and was still partly financially dependent on my parents. I had done a few jobs here and there but after my father's death, I had to get a full time job.
26. Once I had accumulated enough money, I went travelling - backpacking. On my return, I went back to work, saved money and went backpacking again. I alternated my life between work and travelling for a long time. I think I must

have felt that I needed to get away to help me deal with the shock of my dad's illness and death. Even now, I do not feel that I have completely settled down.

27. I believe that the stigma surrounding HIV was the reason why my father did not talk about his illness. Being of a different cultural background that was even less understanding about the infection wouldn't have helped. He probably felt like he had to hide it from so many people. It was awful that he felt that he could not even tell his own daughters.

28. Part of me believes it was unfair of my dad to keep us in the dark, but another part of me believes that he was trying to protect us - he did spare us the pain of dealing with this while we were growing up. It is hard to know which would have been the better choice.

29. My sister was 22 years old when our dad died and his death hit her really hard. She was a single parent and mother to a very young child, my nephew, at the time.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

30. No counselling or psychological support was offered or made available to me in relation to my dad's illness and death. Back then counselling was not much of a thing and we were left to deal with things ourselves.

31. My sister and I were so young when we lost our dad and I think counselling would probably have helped us.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

32. I do not believe that my dad received any assistance whilst he was alive.

33. After he died, we found out that the Government were offering compensation to children of victims of contaminated blood.

34. My sister and I applied and we received £20,000 each. I think my Godmother helped us with the application, and think the process was quick. I was 22 or 23 years old when I received this payment.

35. We had to sign a waiver saying that we would not pursue further compensation or pursue any investigation in the future.

36. My thoughts on the application process are that it happened so rapidly that it seemed like they wanted to quickly hush it up, get people to sign waivers and brush it all under the carpet.

Section 8. Other Issues

37. I would like to get some information about what happened to my father. I know very little about how he came to be infected, when it was found out that he had HIV and what treatment he received from then until his death.

38. I feel that getting us to sign a waiver was not fair. It is not right to force us to sign waivers so that we cannot make any inquiries later on.

39. I believe that the Government should be held accountable for what they did and that the victims should at least get an apology for what happened.

Anonymity

40. I do not wish to remain anonymous and I want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed: GRO-C

Dated 13/8/19