

Witness Name: Barbara Anne Savage

Statement No: WITN4770001

Exhibits: **WITN4770002 - 7**

Dated: 28 July 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BARBARA ANNE SAVAGE

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27 January 2021.

I, Barbara Anne Savage, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Barbara Anne Savage. My date of birth is **GRO-C** 1943 and my address is **GRO-C** Lancashire, **GRO-C**. I have lived here for 35 years. I am retired. Prior to this, I worked as a barmaid in a public house for 26 years. I also worked for the Freemasons. I have been married twice. I have been with my current husband for 44 years. I have four of my own children and two stepchildren. I intend to discuss my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV), believed to have been contracted from a blood transfusion following a Caesarean performed during the birth of my fourth child.
2. I also intend to highlight the fact that I have been unable to secure any financial assistance from the Skipton Fund as it was alleged that there

was insufficient evidence that I was given a blood transfusion in 1978 as my medical records have been destroyed. This is despite supporting documentation from my GP and consultant that I was given a blood transfusion and that this was the likely source of infection. I will go on to discuss this in more detail later in my statement.

3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I am not seeking anonymity. I have not been involved in any litigation.
4. I can also confirm that the Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.

Section 2. How Infected

6. When I was 34 years old, I became pregnant with my fourth child. I had four children at this time; my son Mark was 14, Conrad 13 and Emma was eight years old. The pregnancy was normal and went to full-term. I went into labour on the evening of GRO-C where I was admitted to Accrington Victoria Hospital. My care was then transferred to Queen's Park Hospital, as it was decided that I would require a caesarean. The name has since changed to the Royal Blackburn Hospital. My previous three children were delivered naturally.
7. The doctors overseeing my care quickly realised that it would be a

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I was told that a procedure of this nature was rare at the time. As a result, I was asked whether I would be willing to allow a group of student doctors to watch. I had about a dozen of them standing around watching the operation. Thankfully I was anaesthetised and didn't know what was happening.

8.

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My son, Jonathan Roy Savage was born on GRO-C 1978. My own doctor was on holiday at the time. When he returned, he told me that I should have waited for him to get back as he had never seen GRO-C like this before.

9.

As I said earlier, they put me under anaesthetic and so I wasn't conscious when the procedure was performed. When I woke up, I was being given one drip of fluids and on the other side, I was being given blood. Roy had been sitting by my side throughout. He told me that I had been given 4 units and that he had watched the blood being changed. I don't know whether Roy signed a consent form regarding the blood transfusion. Back in those days you just let the doctors do their stuff.

10. Meanwhile, the baby was

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However,

we did not hear anything of this since and subsequently his health was fine. I remained on that ward for two or three days.

11.

I was then taken back to Accrington Victoria Hospital where I remained for two weeks. I had a big scar across my stomach. This was during GRO-C so I spent my birthday GRO-C in hospital. When I was discharged, a district nurse visited me for a few weeks to dress the wound. She then left me with a powder to treat the wound, which had opened up a bit. I was able to treat this myself.

12. After the birth of Jonathan, life continued as normal. For a long while, when I would put him to bed, **GRO-C**

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GRO-C I was advised not to return to work for six months. I worked for the masons at the time as the head waitress and barmaid. After about two months, they asked if I could come in to supervise. Sometimes, I'd have to take Jonathan with me because Roy worked as a fireman and would have to be on call.

13. I lived with Hepatitis C undetected for many years. Around thirty years ago, I consulted my GP as I was suffering with persistent heartburn, to the extent that even drinking water was uncomfortable. I was referred for an endoscopy at the Royal Blackburn Hospital. Shortly afterwards, I saw my GP, Dr Quinn at Blackburn Road Medical Practice; 227 Blackburn Road, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 0AL. I was told that I had a patch on my liver which was infected.

14. I was then referred to a specialist, Mr David Grimes, who is now retired. He mentioned that there was a problem with my liver. When I asked him if I should be concerned, he told me not to worry and that I still had forty or so years in me. I never saw him again but I was referred to a specialist nurse at Blackburn Hospital.

15. My liver was monitored every six months by the specialist nurse. During one of my appointments, she mentioned in passing that I had Hepatitis C. I had never received an official diagnosis prior to this, so naturally I was shocked. I didn't know what it entailed.

16. When I enquired about the source of the infection, the nurse told me that I would have acquired the virus either from a blood transfusion or from dirty needles. I told her that I was never an IV drug user, albeit I that I had a blood transfusion in 1978.

17. I do not have tattoos. Prior to my first marriage, I had my ears pierced professionally. I am not an IV drug user and I have been happily married for 44 years. Nothing in my lifestyle could have led me to become infected with Hepatitis C other than the blood transfusion I received in 1978.

18. I do not recall being given a great deal of advice on the nature of my illness or the precautions to take including of a sexual nature. I was only told to cut down on alcohol. This was not difficult as I have never been a big drinker.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. To the best of my knowledge, I have not contracted any infections other than HCV as a result of being given contaminated blood. As far as I am aware, I have not been tested for HIV.

Section 4. Consent

20. I have always consented to my operations. Whilst I was undergoing the GRO-C I was unconscious, including whilst I was given blood. I do not know whether or not Roy provided his consent on my behalf. At the time, patients didn't question the medical profession. I put my faith in them and trusted that they would provide me the best treatment.

Section 5. Impact

21. Prior to my diagnosis with Hepatitis C, I did not experience any health issues. I was shocked to learn of my diagnosis because I have never been unwell and have led an ordinary life.

22. My diagnosis affected my relationship with my husband. He didn't react as I would have expected. GRO-D When he

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GRO-C After a few months,
he accepted that I would have contracted the virus through a blood
transfusion. GRO-D

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23. Around five years ago, the specialist nurse at Blackburn Royal Infirmary, whose name I cannot recall, informed me that a new treatment had become available. I cannot remember the name of the medication. She told me that only a certain number of patients would be eligible and thus she was required to convince a panel of judges to offer me treatment.
24. Initially, they refused. However, she would not accept their decision. She appealed, emphasising that I had acquired the infection through no fault of my own and therefore deserved treatment. I am very grateful to this nurse, as it was through her persistence that the panel changed their mind and I was able to embark on the treatment.
25. I can remember taking a large capsule daily for 3 to 6 months. I had to attend the Hospital pharmacy to obtain the medication. They dispensed a month's worth of treatment at a time. I was lucky as I did not experience any side effects. I do get itchy skin but this is likely to be a result of my now diagnosed type 2 diabetes.
26. My first blood test after I finished the course of treatment revealed that the virus was undetectable. I was told that I would need to return as the virus could still be lying dormant. The last blood test I had five months ago revealed that the virus was still undetectable. I haven't been to see the nurse for 18 months because of Covid. I am glad to be clear of the virus but I would like this to be recorded in my medical notes. As far as they are concerned, I still have Hepatitis C.

27. I have experienced stigma from the medical profession as a result of my infection with Hepatitis C. I have two false knees. Around 15 years ago, when I went into the Burnley General Hospital to have my first knee operation, I was told that I would stay in a side ward to protect the other patients from contracting the virus. I was put in a side ward again when I received my second knee replacement five years ago. This made me feel really dirty. As far as I knew, people could only catch the virus if they came into contact with my blood so I didn't understand why such measures were considered necessary.
28. Hepatitis C did not affect my career. I was about 64-65 when I gave up work. I could have carried on until I was 70 but I was forced to retire after my vocal chords were damaged during an endoscopy performed at Blackburn Royal prior to my second knee replacement. As a barmaid, it was impossible to perform my job as no one could hear me.
29. The anaesthetist who was scheduled to perform the procedure persistently left me hanging. Eventually, a really dodderly old man did the job. He was quite stubborn and old fashioned and didn't appear to be following the correct procedure or utilising the correct equipment. I remember him telling the nurses he wanted to use some old fashioned equipment, which he was obviously familiar with.
30. I wasn't too worried when my voice didn't return after the surgery, as this can be normal for a couple of weeks after receiving anaesthetic. However, my voice has never returned to normal.
31. When I went to see my specialist, he referred me to the ear nose and throat department at the Royal Blackburn. Photographs revealed scarring to my larynx, which he attempted to remove but to no avail as the scar tissue merely reattached itself. A friend then put me in touch with a solicitor in Accrington. I was required to contact a leading anaesthetist, who near enough called me a liar. He tried to argue that

only a virus or a tube down my throat for six months could have been the cause of the change in my voice.

32. This change is now permanent and I have to live with this. It cost Roy and I £350 in legal fees to hear that. To date I have a damaged voice and have received no compensation.
33. As far as I am aware, my liver is in an 'alright' condition. There is still a little patch but the nurse has assured me that this should diminish over time. I am due to have an endoscopy every 12 months alongside an ultrasound. However, I have been reluctant to go into hospital as a result the pandemic. My faith in the NHS has also been impacted by the negligent treatment I received at the Blackburn Royal in which my larynx was damaged.
34. I was a blood donor both before and after my blood transfusion in 1978. Because I have a rare blood group, A Rh negative, my blood is in demand. I know this because **GRO-C** and I have opposite blood types. I only learned that they do not mix after the birth of my daughter on **GRO-C** 1970. Prior to this, they didn't test for blood types **GRO-C** I was then given injections of anti-D to counteract the differences in mine and **GRO-C** blood groups so that the same problem would not reoccur with future children.
35. I feel really awful that I was a blood donor in all the years that I carried Hepatitis C. I probably gave blood for at least four years after the birth of Jonathan. Unbeknownst to me, I could potentially have infected others as blood was not screened during this time. I stopped giving blood because on the most recent occasion, I passed out. I never received a letter from the blood transfusion service to the effect that I had Hepatitis C. I cannot remember the date of the last time I gave blood.

36. It also upsets me retrospectively to imagine that I could have infected my children. If I had had a cut or open wound, they could have contracted the virus. They have never been tested.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. Whilst I have not necessarily faced obstacles in obtaining treatment as a result of my infection with HCV, as earlier iterated, on particular occasions at the Burnley General, I feel as if I have been subjected to stigma when I was placed in a side-room rather than the main ward.

38. I have never received or been offered counselling or psychological support as a result of my infection with Hepatitis C.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. The nurse from the Blackburn Royal Infirmary put me in touch with the Skipton Fund. She advised me that if I could prove it, I could receive payment. I applied on 28 July 2009 (Skipton number: 7433). Dr Barbara Milne, my locum GP at Blackburn Road Medical Practice, helped me to fill out the forms.

40. I produce a letter from the Senior House Officer, Osman Halhouli dated 26 January 1979 in which he confirms that I received an emergency

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following the birth of my daughter on

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1978. This letter is exhibited at **WITN4770002**.

41. In relation to my Hepatitis C diagnosis, I produce a letter dated 3 March 2008, from my Consultant Physician, David Grimes to Dr Motupalli at the Royal Blackburn Hospital where he notes: *'she has been found to have hepatitis C virus and the virus is active as judged by the positive PCR test. The virus has been present for 30 years from blood transfusion given at the time of the* GRO-C *and so over these 30 years it has not done her much harm. She does not*

appear to have significant liver disease and does not have diabetes. She is awaiting replacement of the right knee and I think this is the main factor in her life at the moment. There is no reason why it should not go ahead. I have arranged no further intervention at present but I will arrange for clinical review in a year's time. At that stage, [we] might consider treatment of the hepatitis C virus. She drinks only a little alcohol and there is no reason why she should not do so'. This letter is exhibited at WITN4770003. I would like to note that whilst at the time of Mr Grimes' letter, I did not have diabetes, I have since been diagnosed.

42. On 5 October 2009, I received a letter from Burnley General Hospital to inform me that my maternity notes were destroyed 25 years after the last birth, in line with Trust Policy. I exhibit this letter at **WITN4770004**. I do still have a card within my records which notes my blood group and that should I require an operation of any sort, blood must be on standby.

43. On 16 October 2009, my locum GP, Dr Barbara Milne wrote to Dr Motupalli: *'As you know this lady has Hepatitis C antibodies. This letter is to confirm that this infection was likely to have been acquired when she had [GRO-C] more than 25 years ago. It is likely that she had transfusion at the time. She tells me that her husband remembers her having four units of blood. Unfortunately, her hospital notes have been destroyed as the [GRO-C] was greater than 25 years ago'. I exhibit this letter at WITN4770005. There is a stamp in the top right-hand corner of the letter dated 2 November 2009, which, I believe is the date in which Skipton received this letter.*

44. I then wrote to Nicholas Fish, the administrator of Skipton: *'I have done my best to prove to you that I got Hep C through a blood transfusion but my records have been destroyed. I have never done drugs and I have been with my husband for 25 years [GRO-C] [GRO-C] I hope you believe me and I am*

waiting to get treatment for Hep C'. This was also received on 2 November 2009. I exhibit this letter at **WITN4770006**.

45. On 20 November 2009, Nicholas Fish contacted me to decline my application. He wrote: *'Thank you for the further information you provide in connection with your application to the Skipton Fund for ex gratia payment. It is with regret that I must advise you your application has been declined due to the lack of supporting confirmation that you received treatment with NHS blood or blood products prior to September 1991. The page we have received from your medical records provides a brief summary of the treatment you underwent in 1979 but unfortunately does not mention whether or not the use of blood or blood products was necessary during this treatment. Of course, if you do get further information in respect to you claim from either the hospital or your GP's surgery then please return the form back to us along with the supporting documentation and we would be happy to review your application. In such circumstances you may wish for your case to be reviewed by the independent appeal panel, which is chaired by an experienced lawyer and consists of a haematologist. A hepatologist, a GP and a lay person. You will however need to return your form and advise the fund formally in writing if you do wish to appeal'*. I exhibit this letter at **WITN4770007**.

46. I also note that Mr Fish refers to treatment I received in 1979, as you can see the relevant date is 14th December 1978. Not 1979. He has the wrong year.

47. I think Skipton's decision was unfair. I think they should have been more open and receptive to my application, particularly in light of the supporting documents from my GP and consultant, both of whom support that I was given a blood transfusion and that this was the likely source of my infection. I do not think it is fair to rest their refusal on a lack of proof, when my maternity records have been destroyed. I was upset by their decision. It made me feel as if they thought I was telling

lies. I did the best that I could in the circumstances and it was frustrating that this wasn't enough.

48. My Hepatitis C nurse is contacting me on 13 August 2021 and so I am considering discussing with her the opportunity of reapplying for financial assistance through EIBSS.

Section 8. Other Issues

I would really like to know why Skipton did not believe me and used the excuse that I could not produce evidence from my maternity notes. There was evidence provided to them by my GP. I find this very unfair.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

28-7-21

TABLE OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit number	Date	Description
WITN4770002	26/01/1979	Letter from the Senior House Officer, Osman Halhouli, confirming GRO-C on GRO-C 1978.
WITN4770003	3/03/2008	Letter from Consultant Physician, David

		Grimes to Dr Motupalli confirming active HCV, present for 30 years since blood transfusion.
WITN4770004	5/10/2009	Letter from Burnley General Hospital to Barbara Savage re; destruction of maternity records.
WITN4770005	16/10/2009	Letter from Dr Barbara Milne to Dr Motupalli, confirming HCV infection from blood transfusion following C-section.
WITN4770006	Undated	Letter from Barbara Savage to Nicholas Fish supporting Skipton application
WITN4770007	20/11/2009	Letter from Nicholas Fish to Barbara Savage declining application on the grounds of insufficient evidence of blood transfusion.