

Witness Name: K L Croucher

Statement No: WITN 1346001

Exhibits: WITN 1346 002-3

Dated 31st December 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KATHRYN LEE CROUCHER

I, Kathryn Lee Croucher, will say as follows:-

Introduction

1. My name is Kathryn Lee Croucher. I was born on [GRO-C] 1969 and live at [GRO-C] with my son. I currently work part time as an accounts administrator.
2. I make this statement as the widow of Gary Leslie Croucher who was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C as a result of receiving contaminated blood products and who died on [GRO-C] 2010.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of full access to my late husband's medical records.

Section 1. How Affected

4. My husband had severe Haemophilia A with 0% clotting factor and was treated at St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth under Professor Green where he was treated with Factor 8 products made by BPL FVIII, Oxford FVIII,

Factorate, Kryobulin, Cutter FVIII, and Travenol/Hyland/Hemofil FVIII. I refer to Exhibit WITN1346002

5. According to the UKNHDO National Haemophilic Centre ("NHC") records Gary tested positive for HIV on 26 September 1985. However this is not correct as Professor Green told Gary and his mother he was HIV positive in 1983 and the only advice Gary was given was that he should be careful of needle pricks and that he should not have unprotected sex. He was told he would not live past his early 20's. There is a note in Gary's Clinical records dated the 8th January 1985 which states "Said to have been given supply of Factor VIII contaminated AIDS virus. Discuss Peter Green at Central Lab. Has received infu of contaminated plasma fraction but Green says this should lead to development of AIDS antibodies and nothing more. But he has somewhere between 1:100 and 1:500 chance". I refer to Exhibit WITN 1346003. On the "Patient Hep C data" page of the NHC records, it says Gary was "Jaundiced" on the 13th December 1978, Gary was not told he was infected with Hepatitis C.
6. Whilst Gary was "Jaundiced" in 1978, he was only informed that he had been infected with Hepatitis B and C in 1993 by Linda Tucker at the GU medicine clinic at St Marys Hospital which is a Sexual Health Clinic. Gary underwent a blood test, which is how Linda Tucker found out he had been infected with Hepatitis B and C. I consider he should have been provided with this information earlier. I also consider he should have been provided with additional information about the nature of the HIV, Hepatitis B and C infections and to how to manage those infections.

Other infections

7. Gary developed Pneumonia in 2008 as a result of being infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C.
8. I also believe Gary may have been infected with vCJD as a result of being given contaminated blood products as his GP received a letter in 2004 from

Portsmouth Hospital saying he should be considered in the "at risk" group for health care precautions, as a result of being treated with Factor VIII concentrates.

Consent

9. I believe Gary was tested without his consent, as the doctors at St. Mary's Hospital in Portsmouth never explained to Gary or his immediate family (Gary's mother, father and sister) why they were all being tested, they were all just asked to come in and have a blood test.
10. I also believe Gary was tested for the purposes of research because the Oxford Haemophilia centre told Gary they wanted to continue testing his blood as he had a rare strain of the HIV infection.

Impact

11. Gary was never offered any treatment for his Hepatitis C infection because of the rare strain of HIV with which he had been infected and he developed cirrhosis of the liver.
12. The physical treatment Gary received in the various hospitals he often attended was appalling. The nurses and doctors always tried to isolate him from all the other patients. Gary was once hospitalised as a result of a bleed and when I visited him, he told me not one doctor or nurse had visited him for 12 hours. He was surrounded by bottles of his own urine, as he could not leave the bed due to his joints and no one had come to help him.
13. Gary's infected status also made accessing dental care extremely difficult. Consequently Gary always had to visit the hospital to undergo dental treatment. Furthermore, there was one occasion where Gary was due to have an endoscopy but was sent home as they wanted to order a separate endoscopy tube for him. The delay and embarrassment of this decision had an effect on Gary's emotional state and he was very upset.

14. The impact of Gary being infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C on our private, family and social life was enormous. Gary was hospitalised when he was 16 years old, at this time none of Gary's family members, including his parents visited him in the hospital. Also when I first informed my parents that Gary was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C their reaction was quite bad so I chose to stop speaking to them for some time.
15. As Gary's Hepatitis C was not treated, Gary was constantly jaundiced. The yellow colouring of his skin restricted both Gary and I from going out in public as he was embarrassed and wanted to avoid the potential taunting which sometimes occurred. There was also an occasion where Gary and I had arranged to travel to the United States of America with our neighbours, however due to Gary's infected status he was unable to obtain a Visa so we could not go.
16. The impact that Gary's infected status has had on our son Sam was and is very detrimental. Sam had a mental breakdown after his father passed away, however he is now doing a lot better. Sam will speak of his own experience in the witness statement he intends to provide to the Inquiry.
17. The impact Gary's infected status had on me was crippling, at times. I was also treated as though I had HIV. I felt this way particularly in 1993 when I was giving birth to our son Sam who we had through IVF treatment. I had to have a C Section, so the nurses opened a ward in the hospital which had been closed down for two years just so they could operate on me, I felt like a leper. The nurses also stopped Gary from joining me in the theatre room; I cannot put in to words how saddened I was by the hospital staff's behaviour.
18. Gary refused to tell people of his infected status to reduce the stigma that would attach to his family. Gary only told a few of his friends; however people started finding out that Gary was a haemophiliac and would put two and two together. We had people coming up to us in the street asking Gary whether he had AIDS. He just had to continuously hide the fact to protect us all.

19. The infections did not impact on Gary's education, nor did the infections affect Gary's career as he was a provider and always battled through his illness so that he could work.

Treatment/Care/Support

20. Gary faced difficulty obtaining treatment for his Hepatitis C infection. Gary was also consistently promised by the doctors at Addenbrooks Hospital in Cambridge, that he would be given a liver transplant. However there was always some sort of delay or false hope offered to Gary, it was almost like the doctors were dangling a carrot stick over Gary's head in order to keep him compliant with all the blood tests they were putting him through.

21. Neither Gary nor I were ever offered any psychological support. However, when I met Gary in 1998 I persuaded him to go to the GU medicine clinic in St Marys Hospital in Portsmouth, which is a Sexual Health Clinic. We were assigned Linda Tucker as our counsellor; and attended counselling sessions for almost ten years.

Financial Assistance

22. Gary received a £25,000 Hepatitis C payment from the Skipton fund. I then received a further £25,000 from the Skipton Fund when Gary passed away.

23. I also received £400 a month from the MacFarlane Trust, which increased to £1,000 when Gary passed away and continued for one year after his death, then stopped.

24. The MacFarlane Trust assisted me in obtaining life insurance in order to purchase the council flat I live in with my son Sam. They also paid £3,000 towards Gary's funeral costs.

25. I also received £17,000 from the claim against Bayer and Baxter which was litigated in the United States of America.

26. I asked the Skipton Fund for financial assistance with Sam's debts and for house improvements however both requests were refused. I found the process of applying humiliating.

Other issues

27. This tragedy was manslaughter. The Haemophiliacs were knowingly given a death sentence. From my point of view many lives have been destroyed.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

28. I do not wish to apply for anonymity and am happy to give oral evidence if it is required.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Kathryn Lee Croucher

Dated 31 December 2018