

Witness Name: Kevin Prowse

Statement No.: WITN3537001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 30-08-19

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KEVIN PROWSE

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 28 June 2019.

I, Kevin Prowse, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Kevin Prowse. My date of birth is GRO-C 1973 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am currently a bar manager and I have been in this role for seven years. I intend to speak about my mother's active infection with Hepatitis B. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment she received and the impact it had on our family and our lives together. My mother has given a statement, which provides more detail [WITN0951001].
2. I confirm that I am not legally represented and I am not seeking anonymity.

3. I have signed a consent form for the use of my statement dated 03 July 2019 and I am happy for this to be used once my statement is signed.

Section 2. How Infected

4. My mother believes she was infected by a blood transfusion of two units given to her after I was born in 1973. She received the transfusion because she had lost a lot of blood and required stitches and she was very weak. She was not made aware of any risk of infection from the transfusion.
5. Throughout my childhood, my mother was easily fatigued and I remember her often being tired and having to plan family events around her energy levels. She has been in and out of hospital for as long as I can remember.
6. I discovered she was infected when she was diagnosed in 2005 with chronic Hepatitis B. She became very ill whilst on holiday in Cornwall and had to go to Derriford Hospital where she was admitted and diagnosed with Hepatitis B. I know my mother thinks that she could have been told of her infection in a more private setting and with someone there to hold her hand and look after her. Mum has said she was not given much information about the infection.
7. My mother has an active Hepatitis B infection.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. I believe she was only infected with Hepatitis B. She tested negative for HIV.

Section 4. Consent

9. I believe my mother always consented to the treatment and tests and was not the subject of research or experimentation.

Section 5. Impact

10. My mother has described the impact on her in detail in her own witness statement [WITN0951001], but the main symptoms I have noticed are exhaustion and fatigue, which seem to trouble her more and more recently. She has been in and out of hospital and has generally been very ill.
11. From my perspective, mum has always been a lovely lady, outgoing, quick-witted and good humoured, but now that part of her personality is increasingly repressed by her illness. She is less able to travel and do the things she once enjoyed. Her social life has been cut. I remember she used to love singing in the church choir and she recently tried to again, but found that as this took place late in the evening, it was too much and too late for her. Her energy levels decrease as the day wears on. Those little things that I know she could do were she not ill are the things I think she misses most and it makes me angry.
12. When my mother was diagnosed, she approached me to ask if I wanted to be tested but I refused. I think I partly refused out of rebellion, but partly because I didn't want to go to the trouble of being tested as I did not think I would be infected because I was already born when she had the transfusion. However, I know that my mother worries because I have not been tested so I am now considering being tested to put her mind at ease.
13. I feel recently that my mother has accepted her diagnosis and accepted what is going on. She does not fight the infection as much

and accepts she needs to rest. I feel the illness is wearing her down. She recently came to my place of work and just burst into tears. Luckily, I was able to set aside my work and a colleague covered for me so that I could offer mum a shoulder to cry on. She had just been to the doctors about potentially having pancreatitis, as she had been experiencing pain and she had also gone to fill her prescription and they had run out of painkillers.

14. I think sometimes timing stuff so that she can rest and take medication is difficult for my mother and I think sometimes she struggles with her pride, or fears being judged to be weak or lazy. I think, however, that if she needs rest then she needs rest.
15. We spent my birthday this year with her in hospital. Fortunately, I always have my birthday off work so I was able to be there for her. I remember getting a call just after I had woken up from my aunt to say I had to come quickly as mum was very poorly. At the time I lived just around the corner so I had to calm myself not to run out into the road but walk there safely. As soon as I left my house I could hear the ambulance (which had got lost so I had to help direct them). It was rather chaotic. Fortunately, she was okay in the end.
16. For me, I did blame myself when I first understood how she had got the infection, as, were it not for me being born, she would not have needed to have the blood transfusion that infected her. However, I now no longer blame myself, but instead blame outside parties.
17. I sometimes struggle to support mum as I spent a lot of my childhood in hospitals and I don't like them really so it is difficult when I go with her to appointments to hold her hand and be there for her. It has been stressful at times.
18. The impact on my work has been minimal and I do not recall it impacting my education.

19. Financially, my mother's illness has impacted me as every time I have a spare penny then I give it to her and I would worry about her finances, though they are a little better now as she receives PIP, though she had to fight hard for it.
20. My mother's illness did impact our family life as mum did separate from her partner and he seemed like a nice guy and they had been happy so I was sad for mum. However, as I was older and he was not my birth father, I think the impact on me was minimal. I know it did affect mum, though. Mum and her husband had built a charity in Malawi. They worked really hard and raised funds through outlets like car boot sales and had gathered sufficient money to fund an orphanage there. I think it must be difficult for her not to go back and see what she put so much effort in to build and that it must play heavily on her mind.
21. I feel my faith in the NHS has been affected negatively, seeing my mother's care. However, I also saw the care provided to a friend of mine who died from leukaemia, so I have seen the good and the bad. I feel the doctors could do better with wait times and taking account of my mother's tiredness and everything she is dealing with when she attends for appointments. Sometimes it seems you are being pulled from pillar to post.
22. Every Thursday, mum and I have lunch. I don't think she feels able to talk to many people about everything that's gone on so I think our lunch is her counselling session as I am the sponge for everything that has happened during the week. I find it difficult to get my head around the fact she said she was pain free for the first time in ten years recently because I cannot imagine going through that.
23. By far the most significant impact for me is seeing someone I love, a very bright light, slowly getting dimmer and that is the bit that makes

me angry the most. Mum has good days and bad, but the good days are getting more rare.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

24. I think my mother's care and support has been adequate. I know she is currently still taking medication for her Hepatitis B and that she is worried it is not controlling the infection anymore. I also know for a long time she had to take anti-depressants.
25. I have never been offered psychological support or counselling in relation to my mother's illness.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

26. I know my mother has struggled to get the financial support she deserved. She has fought long and hard for her PIP payment and my sister and I have had to support her at times, even if it was just to give her some spending money so that she could enjoy herself.
27. I do think that there should be more financial support for individuals infected with hepatitis B through contaminated blood. After all, they are not to blame for the infection and for some it is just as debilitating as the Hepatitis C virus.

Section 8. Other Issues

28. What I feel is anger and frustration. What happened was out of order and someone needs to be held accountable. I do not know how it worked back then but it needs to be found out. It is a disgrace that this has been left so long and I feel part of the reason it has been left is so that the "problem" dies. I am interested to see what happens with this injustice.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Signed

Dated

30-08-19