

Witness Name: GARY MICHAEL BUCHANAN

Statement No: WITN3584001

Exhibit: 0

Dated: 6 JULY 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN WITNESS STATEMENT OF GARY MICHAEL BUCHANAN

I, Gary Michael Buchanan, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Gary Michael Buchanan. I was born on GRO-C 1966 and I live at GRO-C.
2. My father Robert Buchanan (born on GRO-C 1926) was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) from a transfusion with contaminated blood. He died from liver failure in GRO-C 1999, aged 72.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's medical records.

Section 2. How affected

4. My father had hip replacement surgery in the early 1980s at Charing Cross Hospital in London. He was given a blood transfusion during his last hip replacement and was later told that he had contracted HCV through contaminated blood at that time.
5. My parents were Scottish. My father was from Glasgow. He was a big, strong man, 6 feet 2 inches tall with massive hands. He worked as a maintenance man at the Savoy Hotel. He was an old fashioned, proud, stubborn and very private sort of man. He never shared his worries with us. I do not know when or how my father was told that he had HCV. He told my mother first. In or around 1993 after she had a minor stroke she told me that my father had contracted HCV. She said to me "Your Dad is not well. He has got Hepatitis C. Make sure he is OK, keep an eye on him". I asked her how he got it. I think I asked her why she didn't have it. She explained that my father had had a blood transfusion when he had his hip operation and had contracted HCV then. She then had a major stroke, paralysing the right side of her body a couple of years later, in 1995, she went into a residential home.
6. My father also later told me and my older brother Bobby the same thing. He said it was when he had his last hip replacement that he was given infected blood. He also said that for any subsequent operations, he must, prior to the operation, donate sufficient of his own blood for the procedure. I knew nothing about HCV at that time and didn't really look into it.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I do not believe my father to have been infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

8. I do not know if my father consented to being tested for HCV.

Section 5. Impact

9. My father started to feel unwell 8 or 9 years after having the blood transfusion. He suffered with tiredness, aches and pains, loss of appetite and sickness. He then started to look unwell, he lost weight and I remember that he looked yellow.

10. I started to realise that something was seriously wrong with my father in 1996. He became very confused. He would mumble to himself thinking he was back in the army and wanting to join his old battalion and foam at the mouth. On a few occasions I found him wandering the streets, holding up his trousers. It was a worry because I couldn't lock him in at home but I didn't know what was happening to him or why. My mother had always taken care of my father. I was dividing my time between visiting my mother at the home and keeping an eye on my father. One day I found him lying on the floor and found out he had been there for three days being unable to get back up. The hospital then organised a care package for him with people coming in to help look after him.

11. I remember my father being very worried about my mother throughout the entirety of what was a very difficult time for him. At the beginning he paid her visits but at the latter stages he wasn't up to it.

12. My father knew that he was unwell. In early 1999 he turned up to my door and said that he was going to die. He said he needed me to bury him. I said "Don't be silly", not fully understanding the gravity of his condition. No-one advised me and my siblings of the implications of my father having HCV. He died 6 months later. He had cirrhosis of the liver and then liver failure.

13. My father spent several months at Hammersmith Hospital before being moved to a hospice. In GRO-C1999 on the morning of my wife's birthday I took a phone call from the hospice to tell me my father had passed away. My mother died 6 years later.
14. What upset me the most was that "liver disease from alcohol abuse" was stated as the cause of my father's death on his Death Certificate. My father had stopped drinking some 12 or 13 years before his death. I was angry when I saw that and confronted the Registrar and had an argument with him. I said "what's all this? He didn't drink". He said that the doctor, 'a professional' had reached that conclusion and the cause of death could not be changed. I told him that my father had HCV and his response was "Prove it!"
15. This whole situation has had an enormous affect on me. Having followed the news of the Inquiry over the past year I realise that the blood scandal is bigger than anyone thought. In blaming my father's death on alcohol instead of HCV is nothing short of a cover up. Prior to my father's passing I was very worried about him and seeing him wandering the streets in a state of confusion was distressing to me. I now better understand that his confusion was caused by the damage to his liver. My father was a tough, proud, private, hard working man. After being told he had HCV he kept it to himself and tried to move on with his life. He tried to carry on working, took the dog out for a walk and got on with things. When my mother had her stroke and went into a home, he worried about her. He then reached a point where he could no longer help her or himself and he died.
16. I am the youngest, the baby of the family. I have 6 children (3 from my previous marriage) and 3 of my children never met or knew their grandfather. I find it very upsetting and am disgusted that so many people have died through contaminated blood and have been treated the way my father has, as part of a cover up.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

17. To my knowledge my father was never offered treatment and/or counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

18. I do not believe that my father received any financial assistance from any of the Trusts and Funds set up.

Section 8. Other Issues

19. There are no other issues.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

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

21. I do not wish to be called to give oral evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed... GRO-C.....
Gary Michael Buchanan

Dated 16 - 8 2019