

Witness Name: DARREN READING

Statement No: WITN3673001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: JANUARY 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DARREN READING

I, DARREN READING, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Darren Reading. I was born on GRO-C 1969 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C.
2. My father, Anthony Edward Reading (born on GRO-C 1948) was co-infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from contaminated Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate. His health deteriorated, advancing to AIDS Related Complex (ARC) and he died on 17th May 1991, aged 42.
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 severe Haemophilia A. He was treated at the Cardiff Haemophilia Centre at the University Hospital of Wales, Heath Park, Cardiff (Heath Hospital).
5. My father had a lot of FVIII treatment. He self administered the treatment at home on a regular basis and was wheelchair bound through the numerous bleeds into his joints. My father could not work and was reliant upon benefits. My mother was a housewife bringing up her three children: me and my younger brother and sister. We had a hard upbringing. My mother always had a bit of a drink problem. My father was the person we always went to if we needed anything. He was emotionally available to us. He was a presence that made life that bit easier for us. My father and I were very close.
6. In the mid 1980s my father was informed that he had HIV. I was around the age of 16 years old. My father also knew that he had hepatitis around the same sort of time. He was far more concerned about the HIV diagnosis because of the high profile of HIV/AIDS on the television and in the newspapers. He told me that he had been given FVIII concentrate from the USA and it was contaminated with HIV.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I do not believe my father received any other infections than HBV, HCV and HIV.

Section 4. Consent

8. I do not know if my father was treated or tested without his knowledge and consent but blood samples were taken every time he went to the Heath Hospital.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

9. As my father's health deteriorated he was in so much pain. I remember that he started to lose control of his bowels and would mess himself. It was embarrassing and degrading for my father who was such a proud man. It was equally as embarrassing for me. I was a teenager and I found it very hard to watch what was going on. I would have to leave the room. He was ordinarily a big bloke but he became thinner and thinner and literally faded away in front of me.
10. I was picked on and bullied and abused. People were afraid that they were going to catch HIV from me and I became very lonely and isolated. I started to drink alcohol at that time and took a couple of overdoses, one of which landed me in hospital. We, as a family, kept my struggles from my father. My mother too had started drinking very heavily. There was no-one for us children to talk to. The stigma issue became worse after my father died and the news that he had AIDS became widespread. I was traumatised. I was called names and physically assaulted.
11. My father died in hospital. It was a very distressing death. His Death Certificate lists HBV, HCV, HIV and AIDS under cause of death.
12. Our whole family were close when my father was well but it fell apart when he became ill and died. My father's illness and subsequent death and all the worry and stress of it hit my mother so hard she drank herself to death. We lost her one year after my father.
13. My brother moved to a different town because of the stigma. My sister and I stayed in GRO-C (she being re-housed separately to me because she was pregnant). I was left all on my own and that is when my alcohol intake became bad.

14. My father's infection and untimely death has had a profound impact on my life. I have suffered for 30 years. I have struggled with alcoholism since my father's death. I feel cheated by it. My alcohol addiction has been compounded by the death of my son (whom I brought up) but the source of my issues and inability to cope with my life always goes back to my father. I have two other sons. They too have been affected with the subsequent breakdown of my marriage to their mother. My children never knew their grandparents.

15. I have blocked a lot of trauma from my mind but I remember my father's death like it was yesterday. I am under the mental health team and I have a support worker. I have had many attempts at alcohol detox and rehabilitation, the latest very recently. My health issues are very serious and I am close to being in organ failure. I cannot have another alcohol relapse.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

16. I don't think my father received any treatment for HIV and/or hepatitis.

17. We were not offered any counselling or physiological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

18. I believe there was a small pay-out in the early 1990s, after my parents had passed away, but I can't remember exactly what it was.

Section 8. Other Issues

19. There are no other issues.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

20. I am not seeking anonymity and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Signed

Dated..... 3.02.2020