

Witness Name: James Gallacher

Statement No: WITN3748001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES GALLACHER

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2019.

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is James Gallacher. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am on sickness benefits due to my ill-health. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C. In particular, I will discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me and my family.

#### Section 2. How infected

2. Sometime between 1980 and 1984 I was stabbed in the arm and chest. I was involved in a fight while I was standing in the taxi queue outside Queen Street train station, Glasgow. I cannot be more specific with the date that it happened. I know it was a Friday night. Police took me to the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow. I was seen there by a doctor who treated me.

I do not know the doctor's name. I had to have a blood transfusion as I had lost quite a lot of blood. I was discharged on the Friday night after the blood transfusion as there were no beds available. I went back into the Royal Infirmary on the Monday as I required an operation. After the operation I was given blood products. I think it was blood plasma I received.

3. I was not told before the blood transfusion that there was a risk of being exposed to infection.
4. As a result of being given contaminated blood, I was infected with hepatitis C.
5. In September 2015, [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] On arrival I was seen by the [GRO-C] nurse who took my bloods for testing. This is standard procedure and I gave my consent to this. A few weeks later she came back to me and told me that my blood tests had revealed that I had hepatitis C. I had heard of hepatitis C before. I knew it was associated with drug users. I had never been a "Jagger" (intravenous drug user) and couldn't understand how I had developed this infection.
6. At the time I was told I had hepatitis C I was given no information about the infection. I was given no information about the risks of others being infected as a result of my infection.

### Section 3. Other infections

7. I am not aware of being infected with any other viruses other than hepatitis C from the contaminated blood.

### Section 4. Consent

8. I do not believe that I was ever tested or treated without my knowledge

or consent. I do not believe I was tested for the purpose of research.

### Section 5. Impact

9. GRO-C
- GRO-C I started to have seizures, sometimes six or seven times a day. I was hospitalised a few times at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow. GRO-C
- GRO-C I do not know what ward I was on or the names of the doctors that treated me. I know they did various tests but couldn't find out what was causing the seizures. I had also developed sores on my legs. At the time, I thought I had dermatitis.
10. In January 2016 GRO-C I was still having seizures, so I went to see my own doctor. My GP is called Dr Mills and she is based at Gorbals Health Centre. She referred me to a liver specialist at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. I saw the liver specialist nurse there and also a consultant. I do not know their names. I had tests done and ultrasounds on my liver. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in getting the treatment. My liver was functioning at 4.3 with the normal function being 7.2. I was offered treatment for the infection in March 2016. My liver was showing signs of damage so the consultant was eager to give me the treatment.
11. No one discussed any other options for treatment for hepatitis C other than the option I was given.
12. I had a nine-month course of treatment. This consisted of injecting interferon into my stomach daily. I was also on some oral medication but I don't know the name of it.
13. The side-effects of the treatment were horrific. Almost immediately I felt extremely ill. I began to have more seizures. My skin broke out in a terrible rash. It was painful and very itchy. I couldn't bear to have clothes on. I practically wore shorts and T-shirts the whole time through the

treatment. I was extremely nauseous and couldn't keep my food down. In the nine months I was on the treatment my weight went from fourteen stone to seven and a half stone. I was literally skin and bone. I could hardly get out of bed, I had no energy.

14. Mentally, I became a different person. I was extremely short tempered and very angry. I would snap and shout at my daughter, Corinne Gallagher who I live with, along with my granddaughter who was eight years old when I went through treatment. The atmosphere in the house was horrendous because of my aggression and short temper. I look back and feel terrible about what I've put both of them through.
15. My infected status did not impact upon my treatment for any other medical or dental condition.
16. During the time I was on the treatment I had no social life. I cut myself off from my friends and family. I practically became a recluse.
17. I am aware of the stigma that is associated with hepatitis C. It is associated with drug users. It is for this reason that I didn't tell anyone I had hepatitis C until I was cleared of the infection in 2018. I have never taken drugs intravenously in my life. After I was cleared of the infection, I was happy to tell my friends and family and explained to them that it was from contaminated blood.
18. When I was referred to the liver specialist at the Royal Infirmary he did question me about my lifestyle. He assumed I was a drug dealer at first. He then asked if I had ever had a blood transfusion. We both then realised that this was how I had been infected. I remember the liver specialist nurse saying that they knew that a particular batch of blood was contaminated. She said she knew it had a particular code. She told me that there is another James Gallagher in GRO-C who had the same date of birth as me. She said she wasn't sure if it was me or him that had been given the contaminated blood. I remember getting quite angry with her

because I knew the other James Gallagher, he is a friend of mine, and he hasn't got hepatitis C.

19. When I started on the treatment I became extremely ill and had to give up work. I was working as a martial arts instructor. I have been on sickness benefit ever since.

#### Section 6. Treatment care support

20. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support.

#### Section 7. Financial assistance

21. I believe it was the liver specialist nurse at the Royal Infirmary who told me that financial assistance was available from the Skipton fund. The consultant gave me their contact details. I remember I had to fill in a form and send it to them. I think the form was fairly straightforward. I received a response from them to say that I was not eligible as I had lead a promiscuous or precarious lifestyle. I didn't really know what that meant. I assumed they thought I was a drug user, which makes me very angry. They assumed that because I had been GRO-C I must be a drug user. I have not received any payment from any trust or fund.

#### Section 8. Other issues

22. I do not wish to remain anonymous for my statement.

23. I had an older brother Robert Gallagher who died recently. He was an alcoholic and had cirrhosis of the liver. He had received a blood transfusion in 1982 at the Royal infirmary Glasgow. My late mother was told that Robert had received contaminated blood. It is on my brother's death certificate that he died of cirrhosis of the liver and hepatitis C.

24.

GRO-C

**GRO-C**

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

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