

Witness Name: Ian Kenneth Burt

Statement No.: WITN4735001

Exhibits: 0

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF IAN KENNETH BURTT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29 October 2020.

I, Ian Kenneth Burt, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Ian Kenneth Burt. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1960 and I reside in Edinburgh. I own and run a painting and decorating business in Edinburgh and have done so for the past 30 years. I live with my wife and I have two grown up daughters.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In around 1999, an incident occurred where I was bitten by a police dog. I was driving with my ex-wife who was pregnant at the time, and accidentally drove over an island in the road which was overgrown with weeds. I got out of the car to help her get out from her side, when a man in the car behind me came over to me and started being aggressive towards me. He ended up pushing me, and I retaliated.
4. What I did not know at the time was this man was a special police officer. He ended up driving to the nearest police station and seeking assistance from his Police colleagues. When they arrived at the scene I was still helping my wife. They let their police dogs off and one chased and bit me, causing serious injury. The bite was so bad you could actually see exposed bone.
5. I was taken to Western General Hospital following this incident and I was in hospital for 4 to 5 days. I was given blood plasma and remember this being administered. I got a lawyer to come to the hospital and photograph my injury in the event of future legal action against the Police. My ex-wife and mother in law also came to visit me in hospital following this incident.
6. After the accident I continued to have trouble with my leg for some time, but I did not have any other ill effects. I continued to work and run my business and got on with my life. The incident with the police dog was not pursued legally and all information relating to the incident seemed to disappear. I seem to remember that even my lawyer could not find out anything when he looked into it and it seemed to have all been covered up.
7. In 2003, I travelled to south East Asia and lived there for 3 years; this is when I met my wife Koi in Thailand. I came back to the UK in around

July 2007 and bought a new flat. As I had moved to a new address, I needed to register with a new GP. This was the Ladywell Surgery, 10 Ladywell Rd, Corstorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7TB.

8. When I registered with the surgery, I was told I needed a health check-up as I had been living in Asia. I was not unwell and had not been to the doctors for over 20 years, apart from after the dog bite incident mentioned above. However, I went ahead and had the health check-up and blood tests I needed to register.
9. Sometime after this, a GP from the surgery called me to tell me the results of the blood test. She wasn't clear on the phone and I actually thought she said I had 'River disease' when she probably meant 'Liver disease'. I had no idea what 'River disease' was and I thought maybe it was something I had caught in Asia. I remember even mentioning it to a friend I saw at the hospital later on that I had 'River disease' and he was equally confused.
10. This GP didn't explain what the consequences of having 'River disease' were and clearly, I wasn't even sure what I had from her explanation. Instead she set up an appointment at the Royal Infirmary to see a specialist doctor. It was only at this appointment when I realised I was being treated at the 'Liver' unit and I had HCV.
11. When I first learned about the HCV, I had no idea where I could have acquired this infection and the doctors did not ask me about how I may have become infected. I did not know much about HCV at the time, and I wasn't overly concerned about it either.
12. It was only later that I realised I had become infected with HCV through the plasma received during my treatment for the dog bite at the Western General Hospital. As I have never been involved in high risk activities likely to lead me to be infected with HCV, it was clear this was the only route of transmission. Additionally I never received any medical treatment during my time in Asia.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. I do not believe I was infected with any other infections through the plasma transfusion I received.

Section 4. Consent

14. Although I consented to being treated for HCV with Interferon and Ribavirin, it felt like my treatment was very experimental and a new thing for them. I felt like the treatment was being 'tried out' on me. I'm not sure if this was for the purpose of a study or not. However I did not consent to being part of a study or trial.

Section 5. Impact

15. I started my HCV treatment at the Royal Infirmary a few weeks after my diagnosis. As I mentioned above, it was only at this first appointment at the Royal Infirmary when I actually realised I had HCV. They did advise me at this stage on what precautions to take in order to prevent the spread of HCV. I was never advised to ask my family to get tested for HCV, and to this day this has never been suggested. My GP knows that I have had HCV and is also my wife's GP, so I assume he would have mentioned getting tested if there was a risk to her or other family members.

16. I remember my first appointment at the Royal Infirmary being very quick, maybe half an hour or so. It felt like I was given hardly any information and they were reluctant to give me any information about HCV or the drugs I was prescribed. As I mentioned above, it all felt very experimental as if this course of medication was being tested on me.

17. During this first appointment I was told how to take the Ribavirin and how to inject myself with the Interferon. After this initial appointment, I used to pick up my medication from the hospital about once a month during the 6-month course of treatment. I don't really remember these as being appointments, I just picked up a pack of my medication and that was it. I don't really remember being monitored when I came to pick up my medication.
18. I don't recall a specialist HCV nurse being assigned to me and there was no other support provided. I was given a card with a number to call if something went wrong, but I never had to use this service so I cannot comment on whether they would have provided support in the event of an issue. They never reached out to check on me in any event.
19. During the course of the treatment, I did suffer a number of side effects. I felt sick a lot of the time and would vomit often. I wasn't prescribed any medication to prevent the nausea and vomiting, as you would be given alongside chemotherapy drugs that have the same effect. I had general flu-like symptoms and felt unwell. I also had red marks from where I was injecting myself with the Interferon.
20. Mentally I am a strong person and I didn't feel depressed while on the medication. However, I do think I may have been a bit more aggressive and 'lost the plot' a bit quicker than I normally would. I think I became more difficult to live with and tended to get upset with things more easily.
21. Although I was suffering from these side effects of the medication, I just got on with things as much as I could and continued working throughout this time. I may have had to slightly reduce the amount I was doing but I worked as much as I could and therefore, it didn't have too much of a financial impact.

22. As I stopped drinking and smoking completely while on the medication, it affected my ability to socialise with friends as I couldn't even have a beer if I went to the pub. Although I am only a social drinker, having to just have a juice when I went out stopped me from going out as much.
23. The period while I was on the HCV medication was also a very busy and stressful period for other reasons; my wife Koi had just moved over to Edinburgh from Thailand. We were in the process of applying for her passport, moving flats and there was just a lot going on during this time.
24. Due to everything else that was occurring at the time, I decided not to tell Koi about the HCV and treatment I was having as it would just be something else for her to worry about. I think she thought that I was having side effects from cutting out drink and smoking completely and going 'cold turkey', and attributed my changed behaviour to this.
25. The reason I decided not to tell Koi was not because of the stigma related to HCV as I had told my friends about it, it was just because there was so much else going on at the time and this would have caused additional stress and worry. I did not experience any stigma associated with the HCV diagnosis and I never really saw it as a huge concern at the time.
26. I am a fit person and a hard worker and I was also never a heavy drinker. I think all of these facts made it easier for me to handle the side effects of the treatment.
27. After the six-month course of Interferon and Ribavirin medication, I was told they had worked and I was no longer HCV positive. I was never asked to come in for a follow up appointment or to have any further blood tests.

28. I don't remember having a biopsy or liver scan at any point during my treatment and definitely there were no follow up scans or biopsies suggested. I think the doctor just felt around my liver to see if there was swelling at my first appointment but there was nothing from this point onwards.
29. It felt like the hospital wanted to sweep it all under the carpet and did not want me to return. I was 'cured' and did not question it at the time, but looking back now I know I should have been monitored regularly. I now think this may be because they knew I had become infected by the contaminated blood plasma, and they wanted to cover this up as much as possible.
30. After completing the treatment, I presumed I would be fine and no longer at risk for anything else. I can't remember if I was ever told to tell my dentist or doctors about the HCV diagnosis, but I was under the impression that once I was free from HCV, there was no need to inform anyone. Because of this, I never had an issue obtaining dental or medical treatment or travel insurance.
31. After I had finished my treatment, I got on with my life and never really thought I had any consequences from having HCV. However, just over 12 weeks ago, I was diagnosed with stage 4 liver cancer. I had noticed some pain on my side when playing with my dog and I went to see my GP about it who initially thought it was just a sprain. As the pain continued and it was clearly not just a sprain, she later ordered an X-Ray for me. This showed some abnormalities so I also had a CT scan, blood test and liver biopsy which all confirmed I had stage 4 liver cancer. The cancer has spread significantly, including to my neck and groin.
32. I am currently undergoing cancer treatment which includes chemotherapy and radiotherapy. I have already completed a course of

radiotherapy for my neck and I had a session of chemotherapy the day before meeting with the Investigator to give this statement.

33. My wife Koi and our daughter have only recently found out about the HCV I had; I have told them about this because of the link to the liver cancer I am being treated for. They were shocked to hear about this as I had not shared this information before, and have said they can now understand my changed behaviour at the time I was undergoing HCV treatment.

34. It is clear that the HCV is directly related to the liver cancer, and I am shocked that given this was a possibility, I had no care and monitoring after I finished my HCV treatment. I should have been offered regular appointments and liver scans to ensure my liver was not damaged as a result of the HCV. If that had been done, any problems with my liver could have been identified at an earlier stage and not when it had developed into stage 4 cancer.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

35. I have not faced any difficulties in obtaining medical and dental treatment due to the HCV infection. However, as mentioned above, after I had completed my course of medication I did not think I had to tell anyone about it.

36. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support but I do not believe I have ever needed it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

37. I cannot remember exactly how I found out about the Skipton Fund, but it may have been through the hospital. In 2007 I made an application to the fund and explained how I came to be infected and the background relating to the dog bite I suffered.

38. The Skipton Fund rejected my application and I think it was on almost every basis, which really annoyed me. They said they could not find any information relating to my injury which seemed crazy. It just did not make sense to me that there was no evidence as this had been an incident with a police dog and there must have been some record of it somewhere. My lawyer, ex-wife and mother in law also came to visit me in hospital and saw me getting plasma which they could confirm if asked. My lawyer even photographed my injury, so there was a record of the severity. There also should have been medical records available from the hospital to confirm I had been given plasma and noting the extent of my injuries. It felt like a big cover up to say there was no evidence when I had so many witnesses and there should have been a significant paper trail following this type of injury.

39. I was dumbfounded by the fact that the Skipton Fund were saying there was no evidence of the incident and I decided to appeal this decision. They lost my appeal application and I had to resend all the documentation to them again. I can't remember what exactly I included in this appeal but I can't remember providing much more information than in my original application. However, following my appeal, the Skipton Fund paid me a lump sum of £20,000. I never received any monthly payments from them and they never contacted me again. They did not even explain why they were willing to pay me now and what had changed. I feel like they were trying to get me to shut up and walk away by paying out the lump sum.

40. More recently, after communicating with Samantha May of the Hep C Trust, I have been informed about the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBSS) and that I should make a further claim with them for monthly payments and an additional lump sum, given I have developed liver cancer due to the HCV infection. I was put in touch with Julie Collingham of Russell Cooke Solicitors who helped me trace

my original Skipton application documents. I have recently received these documents and I am in the processing of reapplying to SIBSS.


Section 8. Other Issues

41. I feel that the Inquiry should look closely at the funds that were set up to support those infected, including the Skipton Fund. I believe the directors of these funds failed to do their job effectively and I believe they may have made money from this scandal. A lot of the decisions they made about who would get different types of financial support seems to me, to be very unfair.

42. A lot of people who have become infected with HIV or HCV due to infected blood may not even know how they became infected or how they can access financial support. It has also been so hard to get information from anyone about everything related to becoming infected with HCV and that needs to change. Victims should be offered more support and financial assistance going forward.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed  GRO-C

Dated 15/12/2020