Witness Name: Alan Glendinning Hinchcliffe
Statement No.: WITN5315001
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 23. 6. 21

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALAN GLENDINNING HINCHCLIFFE

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4 May 2021.

I, Alan Glendinning Hinchcliffe, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Alan Glendinning Hinchcliffe. My date of birth is GRO-C 1939, and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am retired, but previously worked as a PE teacher and later a mathematics teacher. I have two grown up children from my first marriage. I remarried sometime after my divorce and my wife and I have now been married for approximately 38 years. She also has two children from a previous marriage.

2. I intend to speak about my Hepatitis C ("HCV") infection, which I contracted as a result of being given blood products to treat mild haemophilia.

3. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on my life.

4. I confirm that I have been chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

5. I was born in GRO-C 1939 and brought up in GRO-C, a semi-rural area in GRO-C, West Yorkshire. Both of my parents have now passed away. My mother died of dementia attached to TIA and my father died after a heart attack and cancer-related complications.

6. As a young boy, I was very sporty, and I enjoyed playing football, cricket, tennis, and even hoped to continue with it professionally.

7. When I was about four years old, I had my tonsils taken out, but I had to be readmitted to hospital for secondary bleeding. As I grew older and required tooth extractions, I would have to go back to the dentists again for my gums to be stitched.

8. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, I continued to enjoy playing sports, as many boys do, so at 16, I applied to attend Loughborough training college to be a PE teacher. My application was successful and I was accepted as a prospective student. Around this time, I suffered a bad kick to my thigh during a football match. This resulted in a hematoma, which had to be aspirated at hospital.

9. Between the ages of four and 16, my bleeding issue was never monitored, although my GP had flagged up that I could have a bleeding disorder.

10. Following the football injury which resulted in a haematoma, it became increasingly clear to my GP that I might have some associated bleeding problems. My GP suggested further investigations should be made as it could be a potential hindrance to me carrying out national service. He said that if it was a severe problem, I would probably be unable to do national service.

11. I was referred to Sheffield Hospital for testing, after which, I was referred to the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford for further investigation. The tests confirmed and classified me as having mild haemophilia.

12. As a result of the haemophilia, I was rejected when called up for national service. The doctors also informed me that I could not be a PE teacher due to the increased risk of injury.

13. I attended Culham College, just outside of Abingdon in Oxford, still in the hopes of becoming a teacher. The college doctor was very aged, and my knowledge of haemophilia was far greater than his, so I pretty much ran rings around him. In the end, I convinced him that I could study PE, Mathematics, and Religious Studies.

14. After two years at Culham, I qualified as a teacher, and I went on to teach at Rastrick Grammar School. After working there for two years, I was seconded for further mathematics study at Bingley College. Upon completion of the course, I worked at a school in Harrogate for five years, teaching PE and Maths, before moving to GRO-C in Dorset to work at Seldown Boys School, where I worked for another four years. Finally, I moved to Holmfirth High School to be the Head of Mathematics and remained there until I retired at 55.

15. My blood did not cause too much of an issue during this time. I mainly was injury-free, but I suffered from bruising more than external bleeds.

16. When I was around 37 or 38 years old, I went to Huddersfield Royal Infirmary for a vasectomy. Around the same time, I had also attended the hospital for a tooth extraction procedure. On both occasions, Factor VIII was administered via a drip as a precautionary measure to prevent excessive bleeding during the procedures.

17. No one warned me of any risks associated with receiving blood products.

18. After my haemophilia diagnosis, I attended Huddersfield Haemophilia Centre for regular check-ups. I cannot recall if this was every six months or annually. Before each appointment, I would be required to provide a blood sample, which I consented to.

19. During one of these regular appointments, the specialist informed me that my blood test had come back positive for HCV. I recall being told that the infection was traced back to either of the two occasions when I received Factor VIII.

20. The specialist went on to say that HCV could potentially cause liver damage and that a biopsy would be taken to determine the condition of my liver. I was told to inform other medical professionals and my dentist about the infection.

21. At the time of my diagnosis, they referred to the infection as HCV as opposed to anything else. It was told to me in a very matter of fact manner, but not much information was relayed to me about the nature of the infection and the risk of passing it on to others. I was just told that I had to be careful that my blood was not handled by people and that I needed to be cautious about managing blood waste.

22. I was not told not to quit alcohol but rather to be wary of how much I drank because it could have much more effect on me now and affect my liver.

23. The doctors also explained that the risk of passing the infection on to my wife was very minimal, but I know that my wife found it quite distressing, so we asked for her to be tested, and luckily her results came back negative.

24. They were adamant that the risk was minimal in any case, and the same doctor that told me off for asking about my biopsy results asked, "why would she even wish to find out". I cannot recall the name of this specialist now, but I remember that the man who succeeded him at the Huddersfield Haemophilia Centre was called Dr GRO-D.

25. When I was diagnosed in or around 1990 with HCV, my haemophilia was reclassified as Von Willebrand's disease (VWD).

26. As far as I am aware have never received a blood transfusion or blood products on any other occasion. I had no hospital visits when living in the south of England and whilst living in Harrogate. I have no tattoos. I have never been an intravenous drug user, and I have never received treatment abroad.

Section 3. Other Infections

27. When I was around 23 years old, I was diagnosed with Hepatitis B ("HBV"), but I cannot recall if I was informed or even aware of how I contracted the infection.

28. I am not aware if I have ever been tested for HIV, but I assume that I would have been tested for this at some point, and I would have been informed had it been positive.

Section 4. Consent

29. I do not believe that I was ever tested or treated without my consent. I consented to receive Factor VIII on two separate occasions, and I routinely gave consent for a blood sample to be tested as a result of my bleeding disorder.

Section 5. Impact

30. I do not believe that HCV has had a significant mental or physical impact on my life in general.

31. After I was diagnosed with HCV, I was referred to the hospital to have liver biopsies regularly. I think it must have either once or twice a year.

32. The first time I had a liver biopsy was not too bad, but the procedures seemed to get more painful after that, and the level of pain seemed to depend on whoever did the biopsy.

33. They would usually communicate the biopsy results to me afterwards, but I do not recall what those were now. I think that the severity of the potential or actual liver damage varied with each result.

34. I remember asking the first Haematologist to explain the results to me, seeing as I did not understand what the numbers meant, but he took offence and yelled at me, saying, "it's taken me years to learn what those numbers mean".

35. Not long after I was diagnosed with HCV, I received the first offer of treatment from the hospital. I think it must have been about a year or two after. I can recall that I had done about four liver biopsies by this point.

36. The hospital informed me that the treatment available was called Interferon, and I looked into it and discussed it with a specialist

afterwards. I also knew of a member of my church who was diagnosed with HCV, and he had gone through the interferon treatment, and it had affected him badly.

37. I decided then that since things with my liver were moving along not too badly, and I was not suffering from any symptoms, I would not have the Interferon treatment.

38. In or around 2016, I was counselled by the blood department again and advised to get treatment for HCV. The specialist Haematologist referred me to an HCV specialist nurse, Sue, who was extremely good. She explained that the days of Interferon were long gone, and the current drugs for treating HCV were much better.

39. She also explained kindly that there was a new treatment currently undergoing trial and was having optimistic results. I stated that I would await the final outcomes of the trial and consider it.

40. I had my next consultation with Sue and a specialist in 2017, and they again advised me to get treatment. My wife and my children also encouraged me to consider the treatment, so I decided to go ahead.

41. Once I agreed to undergo treatment, Sue took me through all the research and discussed everything it would entail. My application had to be sent to Leeds for approval before being placed on the waiting list. This was in late 2017, and I started treatment in early 2018.

42. I think the course of treatment was three- or six-months, but I do not remember the name of the medication. It consisted of a daily injection in my stomach, and I was appropriately trained on how to self-administer the injections. Before starting the treatment, I had been taking Adizem Apixaban at the time for a heart condition, I continued to take Adizem throughout the treatment, but was told to stop taking Apixaban.

43. I did not experience any mental or physical side effects from being on the treatment. I was monitored regularly, I think fortnightly at first, then monthly, but once it was clear that I was not experiencing any side effects, I was left to complete the course on my own.

44. By the end of the treatment, my viral count was low, and it was confirmed that the treatment had been very successful.

45. I do not think that there was any delay in me being offered treatment. If I had chosen to opt for Interferon, I believe I would have been able to access treatment sooner. However, I wanted a high success rate medication and one that would not come with awful side effects. My church member who had taken Interferon much earlier had been incapacitated for more than a year when he went down that route.

46. In those days, there was quite a stigma about HCV, but I was aware that this was not my fault, so I could be open about my diagnosis to friends and family.

47. My friends were all aware of my diagnosis as it's not something I've ever felt ashamed of or necessary to keep quiet about.

48. The diagnosis did make me more anxious and concerned with the effects of anything else I might be doing on others around me. Still, I would not say that it significantly impacted my lifestyle, especially my social life.

49. There was an impact on my private and family life, particularly when it came to the bedroom. Having gone through the process of having a vasectomy, my wife and I had not anticipated that we would have to continue using contraception.

50. My wife worried about the risk of contracting the infection. Although she was assured by medical professionals that the chances were minimal, she was still anxious about the risks.

51. My children were pretty much okay, and although they were GRO-C GRO-C they were mostly out of the home by the time I was diagnosed with HCV and started to have treatment. Like myself, they are very pragmatic.

52. I did not experience any particular stigma, only to the extent of logistics with dentists. Their manner was always professional, but I always had to wait until the last appointment of the day to be seen for treatment. They would also take extra precautions, such as being gowned and fully gloved, which were unusual for the time.

53. I experienced no difference in treatment in any other medical environment. Apart from my HCV infection, I have been remarkably healthy over the years.

54. There was no impact of HCV on my life in relation to work or education. However, as I mentioned earlier, when I was about 22 or 23, I contracted HBV, which impacted my education to an extent, at least in terms of the additional stress it brought upon me ahead of my exams.

55. I am unsure of how I came down with it. It was when I was on the course at Bingley college. I know I was diagnosed around Easter time and could not go back to college for a few months until around June.

56. I had exams, but I could not go back to college, so I had to be assessed based on my work and the results I had achieved up until that point.

57. I do not recall if the doctors monitored my condition after they informed me of the diagnosis. I think I would have been told by my GP in a face

to face appointment because I recall that I was very ill, and I either went to see the GP or the GP came to see me at home.

58. It was very debilitating in general. I was exhausted, tired, lacking in energy, and I had no appetite. My eyes were noticeably yellow and jaundiced. I felt very fatigued and generally unwell, and my symptoms persisted throughout this period but never arose again.

59. I think it must have cleared up naturally. I recall the doctor saying that the infection would clear itself.

60. I kept getting tested for my blood issue over the years. In 2012, or perhaps a little earlier, I was informed by a specialist that they could not see any indication of the VWD. The specialist said that he had never come across a case like it.

61. I was not aware that I may have come across a barrier to getting insurance. I have always declared that I had HCV on insurance forms, so perhaps they may have charged higher fees or premium, but I have not noticed. I would have just paid whatever the cost was, so it has never been a barrier to receiving insurance.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

62. My family and I have never been offered counselling or psychological support in relation to my HCV infection.

63. My Hepatitis Specialist Nurse, Sue, was brilliant throughout my treatment. She supervised the treatment and gave me phone numbers to call if I needed any type of support. She made sure I was aware that she was always available, and if I rang her to check on anything, she was always there and remained upbeat.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

64. I do not recall any medical professional mentioning that there were any means of obtaining some financial support, as a result of my HCV infection. I first heard about the Skipton Fund from one of my daughter's friends, who informed my daughter that we could be eligible for support through the Fund.

65. My daughter and I reviewed the information to make sure I was eligible, filled out the forms, and we took it to my GP, who helped sign it off.

66. I found the application process relatively straightforward. I obtained the dates I could have possibly been infected from my GP and included them on the forms before sending them off.

67. The Fund approved my application, and I received a stage one payment of £20,000 on 28 January 2005. I do not recall having to sign any waiver or preconditions to obtain the payment.

68. I was aware of a stage two payment, but I did not feel like I was entitled to that, so I did not pursue it further.

69. In 2016/17 I applied for an annual payment and was receiving £3,500 per annum until the Skipton Fund was taken over by the England Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS).

70. Currently, I receive £1,500 a month from the EIBSS. After I was cleared of HCV, my wife became concerned that we were still receiving the money, but I queried them, and they sent a letter in return confirming that it was fine. My wife felt reassured by the letter.

Section 8. Other Issues

71. I recently requested my medical records from my GP after being contacted by the Inquiry for this interview. I was given access to view

these online, but the only documents that I could see available to me were relatively recent and nothing dated back to when I received Factor VIII and was diagnosed with HCV.

72. I have very little involvement with the Haemophilia Society. I wrote to them when I was first diagnosed with haemophilia as a teenager and received an information pack. However, since then and as an adult, I have not felt it necessary to contact the society.

73. To some extent, I feel angry that this situation has occurred within an organisation held in such high esteem across the country. It's a massive blot on their copybook.

74. The contaminated blood scandal has had a massive impact on the lives of so many children and families, simply because they received blood to save their life in the first instance. We lost a son a couple of years ago in an accident, but these children have died in preventable circumstances.

75. No amount of money can ever compensate for people's lives and the emotional impact on so many others must be horrendous. Whilst I tend to think most about children, it's equally significant for the adults who have also been let down by the NHS through the use of infected blood.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 23.6.21