

Witness Name: Matthew Northwood

Statement No.: WITN6611001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 10 October 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MATTHEW NORTHWOOD

I, Matthew Northwood make this Statement to assist the Infected Blood Inquiry in relation to its investigation arising out of the tragic circumstances of the death of my late father, Gary Northwood.

Section 1: Introduction

1. My Dad, Gary was born on the GRO-C 1945 and tragically succumbed to the effects of both HIV and Hepatitis C infections on the GRO-C 2010.
2. I am the son of a person with Haemophilia who received contaminated Factor VIII concentrates for his Haemophilia A condition. I was just over 5 months old on GRO-C GRO-C 1985 when my father was diagnosed with HIV infection.

Section 2: How Affected

3. My dad was a person with severe Haemophilia A with a Factor VIII level of less than 1 and required treatment for his Haemophilia condition in relation to spontaneous bleeds, traumas and was regularly in receipt of Factor VIII concentrates. He relied upon his Medical Advisors in relation to the selection of Factor concentrates.
4. My parents were informed that they could not have children and therefore the arrival of myself and my older sister Sarah was very unexpected, and our parents sheltered us as far as possible from life's ills and tried their best to give me a 'normal' childhood. At the time they had little money, this meant that my parents had to sacrifice things

to give me and my sister a good childhood. My mother would work extra night shifts to try to bring in more money and I do not think that this was fair on her. It also meant that my dad would work harder than somebody should, I remember him working and sleeping at the hospital on the switchboard, when the doctors changed their rotation with the hospital he would be there for double shifts and sometimes over 24 hours.

5. My Dad was always extremely careful about his treatment at home and he would not want me and my sister near him when he was doing his injections, this was through fear of something happening to us. I remember being curious as a young child and I would try to see what he was doing. He would always watch us when we were near by at those times. I now realise that this was because he was very fearful and anxious that I would come into contact with his blood.
6. We used to go fishing. One day he had an injury where the hook was embedded in his thumb and I tried to help him. He moved away from me and made up an excuse to keep me at a distance. I did not know about his HIV infection at this time. My dad was a gentle and calm person but I believe inside himself he was scared in these moments. I now understand why he behaved like this it was from an overwhelming fear he would infect me.
7. I did not understand at times why my father could not do all the active things like football and other sports with me when I was little. However, we shared a love of snooker and pool, we had a pool table in our house. This was something we could do together even when his mobility was not that good as we did not need to leave the house.
8. My Dad became depressed over time. I know now what he was dealing with in his thoughts everyday of his life. I had a fantastic relationship with my dad and he was and still is my idol. The strength he showed to cope with what was done to him and the repercussions to his family is beyond anything I've witnessed in my life. He fought for every breath he took right up until he couldn't anymore. He was never beaten mentally by the awful death sentence he was given in 1985 and if I'm half as strong as he was in his life I will be proud of myself.
9. I am very good at cue sports and I played in a county league with my dad, it was a passion we shared together, it was a way for us to just enjoy spending time together. It was hard watching him struggle with bleeds in his arms and legs, he would still play

his matches even with his arms and legs strapped with bandages, he did this because he wouldn't let the universe take away his enjoyments in life.

10. On [GRO-C] 2010 all my family came to watch me in a singles pool final, I won the cup, this was my first singles title as an adult and my dad went crazy cheering. I know how proud of me he was. We went on holiday just after this and Dad was very unwell, he could not do much because he was in so much pain with his abdomen. It was hard to watch and not be able to help him. He went to the doctor when he returned from holiday and this is when he was diagnosed with liver cancer. He was told he had 6-12 months to live, but he survived for 3 weeks. He was ripped from us in a short space of time from diagnoses to him passing away. He still didn't give up, he wanted any treatment that would mean he could stay with his family for another day or even another minute. The doctors didn't seem interested telling us as a family there isn't anything they could do.

11. Mum and Dad had made plans for their retirement running kennels in Lincolnshire and had spent years arranging this and applying for planning permission and setting up the business. The dream of a future for them to be together in retirement with the hope of a normal life. This lasted 5 years from 2005-2010. His diagnoses of liver cancer was due to the hepatitis and HIV.

12. I had proposed to my fiancé in [GRO-C] and we had arranged to get married the following year, but due to Dad's diagnosis we brought the wedding forward to [GRO-C] 2010 thinking we had time, we suffered financial penalties as a result, of this, but it was very important to share this day with my family and have Dad be there when we got married. However, our plans were not to come true and my dream for my Dad to see me get married to my now wife was not be.

Section 3: Other Infections

N/A

Section 4: Consent

13. I do not believe that my parents were ever fully informed as to the risks associated with any of the treatment undertaken by my dad.

Section 5: Impact

14. I will never forget the day he shared his diagnosis of HIV with me, it is burned in my memory. I could see how devastating it was for him to tell me. I was 25 years old at the time and I saw the fear in his eyes when he told me; this is something that plays on my mind to this day, the thought that my father believed that I would reject him because of his HIV infection. I was absolutely devastated to know the truth about the HIV but the pattern of my childhood and things that happened began to make sense. Tragically we had not much time to share following this awful news or for me to support him as Dad was admitted to hospital on GRO-C 2010 and he tragically died at home surrounded by his family on GRO-C 2010.
15. I went into a period of deep denial and I was the only male in the house trying to fill shoes that could not be filled.
16. I tried to participate in a pool competition in 2010 after Dad died but I couldn't play, I broke down. Mum had to come and collect me. I went into a depression and did not care about anything. My family had to give me a lot of support and I was lucky to have them. I couldn't have been angrier with everyone that did this to him and knowing that it was pure negligence from the professionals involved.
17. My mother although devastated by my Dad's death, was amazing. She helped with the wedding plans. She wouldn't let the day be any different for us, it was a great day with a huge part missing but my mum was there and that's where my dad would have wanted us all to be. I now realise I had put my emotions on hold and felt numb at the time. What should have been the happiest day of my life was marred by my Dad not being there. My mum and wife were amazing.
18. My sister got married in GRO-C Sarah asked me to walk her down the aisle as Dad was no longer with us. I wasn't sure what to feel but after much discussion I agreed and although I was very proud to do so, I felt the hole in my family from my dad not being able to do what he dreamed of doing one day for his daughter.
19. I struggled with depression, it was my dream to become a professional pool player, In 2013 I entered a county pool competition and made it to the final. I needed to prove to myself that I could do it but as Dad was no longer alive it was just a constant reminder of him and my heart was no longer in it. It was a constant reminder of why

I played and I didn't feel the same about the game, I retired in 2013 and I know it was the right decision now.

20. In 2013 my wife and I were told GRO-C and this was a blow to myself and my lovely wife. She had been through so much supporting me through a depression that almost cost me my marriage. We were able to deal with the news through support and the strength we were taught by my parents.

21. In 2015 my wife and I were blessed with the birth of our beloved daughter GRO-C
GRO-C She is a joy to us. My family and my Mum helps us to raise her. I know how much my Dad would have enjoyed having a grandchild and this makes me miss him more as he is not here to share our joy. The things he would have shown her and taught her and she would have loved him so much.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

22. I was put on anti-depressants and continue to use them to this day. I didn't seek counselling as I find it hard to talk to strangers, the support from my family and the strength I learnt from my parents is how I cope day to day with my thoughts and feelings.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

23. My parents received no financial help to my knowledge and it disappoints me as maybe they could have had at least one less thing to worry about.

Section 8: Other Issues

24. I have talked a great deal to my Mum about why she and Dad did not tell us about his HIV and Hepatitis. She explained that they both lived in fear that anyone would find out and cause problems for me and my sister. They held this secret because of the stigma and discrimination they had suffered when anonymous notes came through the door amongst other terrible acts towards them. Mum and Dad just told people he had arthritis and only a few close people knew he was a haemophiliac. I can't imagine how you would feel in this situation because me and my sister were shielded from the hurt of knowing the truth and we had a great childhood. This was the right decision my parents made at the time and I feel now that it was also a tragedy to have to make that decision as a parent. These are the things that were caused by the devastating infection given to my dad

25. It is very hard to put into words the effect Dad's infection has had on us as a family.
It has destroyed many lives not just ours and I wish I could say more or find the words
to make everyone know how we really feel.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed: _____

GRO-C

Matthew Northwood

Dated: 10.10.21