

Witness Name: Georgina
Backhouse

Statement No.: WIT1824001

Exhibits: WITN1824002

Dated: 11 August 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEORGINA BACKHOUSE

Section 1. Introduction

I, Georgina Backhouse, will say as follows.

1. My date of birth and address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I live in Liverpool and am a mother of three children (two sons and a daughter), and grandmother to one grandchild.
3. I work full time as a Family Contact Worker for Liverpool's Looked After Children.

Section 2. How Affected

4. I make this statement on behalf of my mother who I believe was infected through a blood transfusion with contaminated blood.

5. My mother, Josephine Mary Reisenman, sadly passed away on 3rd June 1976 at Sefton General Hospital, Sefton Park. Mum had four children, myself being the eldest, followed by Rebecca, next my brother Jonathan and then the youngest, Gerard.
6. My mother was given a blood transfusion following the caesarean birth of my brother, Gerard, on or shortly after the date of his birth, GRO-C 1975. I believe that the blood transfusion was given at either Oxford Street or Mill Lane Hospital. Despite many requests, we have never been able to obtain any records for my mother, so the exact date of the transfusion is not known, nor is the batch number of the transfusion. I was only five years old at the time, so I do not remember the events myself.
7. I do not know whether my mother, or my father, was given any information or advice before the transfusion about the risk of being exposed to infection.
8. As a result of the blood transfusion, I believe my mother was infected with Hepatitis B (HBV). I do not know whether she was infected with any other infection as a result of being given contaminated blood.
9. My father recalls that Dr Turner, of Sefton General hospital, informed him my mother had Hepatitis B.
10. I am unaware of any information about HBV being given to either of my parents to help them understand and manage the infection.
11. In terms of whether information should have been provided earlier, I would certainly have liked to have been informed that recipients of blood transfusions during these years were at risk of infection from contaminated blood.
12. I am afraid I do not know how the results of tests about the infection were communicated to my mother as I was too young at the time. I also do not

know what information, if any, my mother was given about the risk to others of her infection.

13. My mother died seven months later, on 3rd June 1976. My mother's death certificate recorded the cause of her death as I (a) Acute Hepatic Failure, (b) Chronic Active Hepatitis (**WITN1824002**).
14. My mum was fit and healthy at the time she gave birth to her fourth child, Gerard, on GRO-C 1975, yet she died seven months later. My brother, Gerard, was not infected with HBV, which our family believe he would have been if mum had HBV prior to giving birth. As my mother had no other risk factors for HBV, this leads our family to believe that she must have been infected with HBV via the blood transfusion after giving birth.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. As described above, I believe my mother was infected with HBV as a result of receiving contaminated blood from a blood transfusion in 1975. I do not know whether she received any other infections as a result of the transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

16. I do not know whether my mother was treated or tested without her knowledge or consent, or without being given adequate or full information, or for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

17. My mother died within seven months of becoming infected with HBV on 3rd June 1976. There was, unfortunately, no time for treatment before she passed away.
18. Unfortunately, mum was not alive long enough after being infected for me to describe the impact on her private, family and social life. She died leaving behind four children aged five and under, who all still feel the impact of her death to this day.
19. The impact of my mum's death on has overshadowed my life since the age of five. I have lived with the continuous frustration, hurt and anger, knowing that nobody has ever acknowledged that my mum died from being given a blood transfusion of contaminated blood.
20. I have missed out on the right to have a relationship with my mum. Not having the support, guidance and love from my mum affects my life daily. Recently I have become a nan for the first time and can see what my children have missed out on and I have lost.
21. From the very young age of five and a half years I lived the very difficult life of growing up in and out of the care system. I missed out on the chance of a happy childhood, having to take on the role of the motherly figure to my siblings.
22. Emotionally, I am unable to deal with this issue effectively as an adult as, after much investigation, I cannot obtain my mum's medical records. This leads me to believe they have been purposefully destroyed.
23. The stigma of the infection affects me as I feel I cannot discuss what happened to my mother in public, either with close friends or others.

24. My mother's death impacted on all of our family. My father was left to pay the mortgage alone as a single parent, and all four of us children were left without a mother. We were all affected by living in the care system and being moved about throughout our childhoods. Moving schools impacted on our education and grades, as I found that growing up without the love, guidance and support of a mum resulted in me leaving the education system with no qualifications. We have all felt the lasting effects on our emotional and mental health. Both myself and my daughter-in-law have experienced unnecessary emotional trauma after giving birth due to the fear of blood transfusions resulting in death, as it did with my mum.
25. The loss of mum to hepatitis has impacted on every day of mine and my family's lives, and we feel it every day, and will continue to do so.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

26. Unfortunately, my mum did not live long enough for there to be time for treatment. Counselling or psychological support has never been made available either to my mother at the time, or to me or any other family members either then or at any time since.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

27. My mum received no financial assistance and neither has any of the family.

Section 8. Other Issues

28. I have tried to obtain my mother's medical records but have been unable to find anything. NHS England has not been able to locate any GP records for her and have said that it is likely her records have been destroyed in accordance with NHS retention policies at the time. Sefton

General Hospital no longer exists and, despite requests being made of the hospitals and trusts who might now have responsibility for this archive of records, nothing has been found.

29. I wonder whether her medical records have been destroyed because of the infected blood scandal.
30. I have also tried to request my own records from birth, but have been unable to, and this leads me to further question why such records can be missing.
31. I hope the Inquiry will establish how and why this tragic scandal with contaminated blood was allowed to happen and not be uncovered for so many years.
32. I hope the Inquiry will be able to hold people to account for, and obtain an acknowledgement of, the devastating effects of the impact of the contaminated blood scandal on the lives of so many individuals and their families, especially my mum. The loss of my mother continues to be felt by our family every day.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated11 August 2020.....