



Witness Name: Maureen Cruickshanks

Statement No.: WITN2109001

Dated: 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MAUREEN CRUICKSHANKS

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, Maureen Cruickshanks, will say as follows: -

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Maureen Agnes Cruickshanks. My date of birth is GRO-C GRO-C 1961. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am a bank clerk. I intend to speak about my contraction of hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me and my family.

#### **Infected Blood Inquiry**

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2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons solicitors to be my legal representatives. I confirm that the Inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

## Section 2. How Infected

3. On GRO-C 1986, I gave birth to my son at the Vale of Leven Hospital in Dumbarton. At the time of birth my platelet count was very low and it was decided I needed a blood transfusion. A few days after the birth I received 2 pints of blood by way of a blood transfusion. I do not know the name of the consultant I was under at the time. It was due to the blood transfusion and receiving contaminated blood that I became infected with hepatitis C.
4. It was deemed necessary for me to receive a blood transfusion. No information or advice was provided to me beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection.
5. I was infected with hepatitis C.
6. In 1998 I went with a colleague of mine to give blood at the church hall in Oban. About a month after given blood I received a letter from the Blood Transfusion Centre, Glasgow. The letter asked me to contact them as they had tested my blood and it showed abnormalities. I contacted the Blood Transfusion Centre and made an appointment to attend. I can't remember the exact date.
7. At my appointment at the blood transfusion centre I was told that I had contracted hepatitis C. I cannot remember who told me and provided me with information about hepatitis C

8. I do believe adequate information was provided to me to understand and manage the infection. I remember they were very thorough at the appointment.
9. I do believe that I was given the information that I had contracted hepatitis C at the earliest opportunity.
10. I remember at the appointment the staff at the Blood Transfusion Centre that told me I had hepatitis C asked me a number of questions. I was very shocked. I was asked if I was a drug taker as that is how hepatitis C can be contracted, by using other people's needles. I was also asked about my sexual activity.
11. I was told that there were risks that I could infect other people. I was told that I could pass it on through sexual intercourse. I was also told that it could be passed by blood to blood contact or bodily fluids.

### Section 3. Other Infections

12. I did not receive any other infection or infections other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood products.

### Section 4. Consent

13. When I went to give blood in 1998 my blood must have been tested for hepatitis C. This was done without my knowledge and without my consent. I certainly wasn't told at the time that I would be tested for hepatitis C.

## Section 5. Impact

14. I did not have any mental or physical effects of being infected with hepatitis C.

15. I had no further medical complications or conditions resulting from my infection.

16. I was referred from the blood transfusion centre to Gartnavel Hospital, Glasgow. I was under the care of Sister Spence. This was in 1999. Sister Spence informed me that there was a drugs trial that was available to me to try clear and my infection. I was told that it was a year-long treatment consisting of three injections a week of Interferon Alpha.

17. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing this treatment.

18. I was not informed that there were any other treatments available for hepatitis C at that time. I understood that this was the only treatment available. I was informed that it was a drugs trial. The mental and physical effects of the treatment were horrendous. I would go so far as to say it was the worst year of my life. Almost immediately I started injecting myself with Interferon I became extremely fatigued and lethargic. All my muscles ached and I suffered with nausea. I also got rosacea on my skin. I lost a tremendous amount of weight and at one point was down to 7 stone. I developed an overactive thyroid and had a 'goitre' on my neck. I remember going to see my own doctor about this condition. I saw Dr Colin Wilson at the Oban Health Centre and he referred me to a specialist at Westerton Hospital Glasgow. I don't know who I saw there but I was given medication and my condition improved.

19. Mentally, I became very depressed I remember I was crying most of the time. I found it very painful to inject the Interferon. I became very emotional. I was attending at Gartnavel Hospital once a month to collect

my Interferon injections. I do not believe I was given enough needles to inject as I was injecting with blunt needles, which was very painful.

20. As I stated earlier whilst on the treatment it was the worst year of my life. My husband was very supportive but had to watch me suffer. It affected the whole family as I was often too exhausted to go out and socialise with them.

21. I am aware that there is a stigma surrounding the diagnosis of hepatitis C. It is associated with sex workers and drug addicts. When I was initially diagnosed I did not tell anyone of my infection other than my close family. I remember I didn't even tell my own mother at that time. I had no choice but to tell her whilst I was taking the treatment as physically it was obvious that I was clearly unwell and I had no choice but to tell her.

22. Throughout the treatment despite my fatigue I continued to work full-time. At the time I was a care worker working with people with mental and physical disabilities it was a very emotional job. I had no choice but to continue to work as we needed the money. I did struggle throughout the whole year with fatigue to keep going into work.

#### Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

23. I do not remember if it was Sister Spence at Gartnavel Hospital Glasgow or one of my nurse friends but I received a telephone number of a helpline that had been setup for people who had been infected with contaminated blood. I do remember I rang this number and spoke to someone at length one night when I was on the treatment.

24. I have not been offered or received any counselling or psychological support.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

25. I believe it was my mother who found out that financial assistance was available for people who had been contaminated with hepatitis C.
26. In November 2018, I received a lump sum of £50,000 this was from S.I.B.S.S. I was also informed that I would receive an annual payment of £1,000. I have not received this yet.
27. The process for applying for financial assistance I found to be very straightforward. I received an application form and filled it in. I did have to provide proof that I had received a blood transfusion. This was straightforward as it was on my doctor's medical records.
28. I did not have any difficulties or obstacles in applying for or obtaining financial assistance.
29. I do not believe there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

30. I do not wish to remain anonymous in this enquiry.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed 

GRO-C
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Dated 31/4/19