Witness Name: Mary Mahood
Statement No.: WITN2191001
Exhibits: none
Dated: 7th July 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARY MAHOOD

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 15th May 2020.

I, Mary Mahood, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Mary Mahood. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1953. My address is known to the inquiry. I worked as a hairdresser for around thirteen years but I had to stop due to my arthritis and I am now retired. I intend to speak about my experience of becoming infected with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

2. I was infected during an operation on my bowel at the Law hospital in February 1983. My bowel had perforated so they had to remove it. I received

a blood transfusion during the operation comprised of five or six units of blood. The surgeon for was responsible for this operation, was called Mr Picard. The doctor who treated me for my liver problems and Crohn's Disease is called Dr Crofton who is based at the Law Hospital.

3. I did not receive any information about the risk of infection before I received the blood transfusion, it was too quick. I had been receiving treatment in Law Hospital for something and I was sent home for a few days. Whilst at home, my bowel perforated and I had to be operated on immediately or I would have died. I wasn't given any information about the risks posed from the transfusion afterwards either.

4. Dr Crofton diagnosed me in 1997 at Law Hospital. I cannot remember the exact date. I was having some bloods taken on the Thursday and he phoned me on the Monday to come in on the Wednesday because he wanted to do a liver biopsy. He told me that my blood work had showed that I had hepatitis C and he wanted to confirm it with a liver biopsy. I had to have a large needle inserted in between my ribs for the liver biopsy. He pushed the results through straight away and confirmed that I had hepatitis C. I had the liver biopsy on the Wednesday and I started my treatment the same day.

5. I was shocked to find out that I had hepatitis C. I had not been feeling great before my diagnosis, I was very lethargic, sometimes I didn't have the energy to get dressed and I would have to get help. I had initially gone to my GP, Dr Clark based at Dr Clark & Partners within the Houldsworth Centre, Wishaw, about my symptoms and he thought I had a virus and gave me some antibiotics. I was not happy with that explanation, but not long after that was when Dr Crofton got in touch about my blood tests.

6. When I was told about my diagnosis, I was given leaflets to read about hepatitis C and Dr Crofton took care of me. I saw Dr Crofton every two weeks for about a year.

7. I think the information I was given was enough to understand the infection.

8. They could not have known any earlier about my infection. At that point in time, I was having my blood work done every four weeks and the infection just so happened to show up at my most recent blood test. I was told by Dr Crofton that it can take anything between fifteen to forty years to show up in your blood work. It was exactly fifteen years for me.

9. On the day I was told, Dr Crofton sat with me for about an hour talking me through it all. He talked me through the treatment as well and I couldn't have asked for anything better from him really.

10. At my appointment with Dr Crofton he told me everything that I had to watch for and explained what I had to do avoid cross infection.

Section 3. Other infections

11. I am not aware of having contracted any other infections other than hepatitis C. I do suffer from arthritis and Dr Crofton said that this could have developed as a result of my Crohn's Disease or through the treatment for hepatitis C but he was not sure. He told me that around ten years ago.

Section 4. Consent

12. I do not believe I was ever treated or tested for anything without knowing about it. Everything was always explained to me.

Section 5. Impact

13. Mentally, I could not really take it in, for quite some time. I was housebound for a period as well, and found I could not move very well because of the fatigue. My late husband was working at that time so I had to get my niece to come and look after me when he was at work. Things went on like that for nearly two years before I started to improve.

14. I was tired all the time and I had a lot on pain with my joints. There were times I could hardly walk, it was difficult to get up and down the stairs. Dressing was quite difficult at times as well. I still suffer from that kind of lethargy even now.

15. At the time, I felt like I might die. It took a very long time to feel even close to normal again. I was close with my Consultant and my Surgeon that when they died, I didn't really have anyone else to talk to about everything. I was not referred on to any other doctor.

16. I was quite depressed but I did not take medication for it. I managed it the best I could, but the depression was quite bad, especially when I could not go back to work.

17. Through the years I have had cancer, I have diabetes now and I have lymphedema but I could not say if any of these were related to my hepatitis C or not.

18. I was given interferon alpha injections to treat my hepatitis C in 1997, when I was diagnosed. The treatment was successful and Dr Crofton gave me the all clear from hepatitis C about six years later. I get my blood work done every four weeks, to check on my liver as part of this. The treatment lasted around six to ten months and it was at the Law Hospital.

19. The treatment was very debilitating, my joints all flared up, it was horrendous. It caused a lot of pain. They managed to get the pain under control with medication, but everything just seemed to go wrong for me physically, my arthritis became a lot worse. A lot of these problems that developed from receiving the treatment, are still ongoing.

20. The treatment made me quite depressed. I felt like I was dying and that I might not be able to get through it. The first couple of weeks, I was self-administering the injections myself but I had to stop. I could not do it

because of my arthritis, my hands were too shaky. My Husband did it for me after that.

21. I am not aware of any other treatments I could have had. Dr Crofton started me on interferon straight away, he was brilliant. He did not suggest anything else, I was just treated as soon as possible with the interferon alpha.

22. I informed my dentist when I found out about my infection, but they were always very careful. My dentist knew about it, and he always took precautions when I came in for treatment.

23. I essentially had no social life when I was suffering from hepatitis C, I was housebound due to the effects of the infection.

24. My family coped fine with my infection, they all understood it and were very supportive. They could not believe it to start with, but after they had come to terms with it, they were great.

25. I did not find the stigma to be a problem. My friends and family that knew about it, were fine with everything, they did not have any issue with the stigma. I knew that there was stigma around the infection out there, but thankfully I was spared this.

26. I was unable to work because of my infection. There was no way I could go back to work, especially with the way my hands were affected by my arthritis. As a hairdresser, you use your hands all the time. I couldn't do my job the same way, there was no way I could ever go back. I tried to keep working initially, but my health just deteriorated after my diagnosis and there was just no way I could go back to work. I haven't been able to work since then. I worry that it would be difficult to hold down a job while having to take so many days off to attend to my health. There was also the worry that I did not know what else I would do. I was not qualified to do anything else. With my arthritis I could not work in a supermarket, or do anything manual. I've essentially been retired since I was twenty nine.

27. I was fine financially after having to leave work because my husband was still working. We were okay, we managed. He died seventeen years ago in 2003 due to an unknown infection in his liver. I don't know if I passed anything on to him or not but it was not determined at the time.

Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support

28. I have never really needed support from anybody else to be honest. My nieces come and help me when I need it. My family have been there for me. I felt I could be taking care or support away from somebody that really needs it, so I have never thought about asking for support.

29. No counselling or psychological support has ever been offered to me. During the time I was infected, I feel that kind of thing would have been helpful, but I was not offered anything, so I just had to get on with it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

30. Dr Crofton put me in touch with the Skipton Fund and I received a lump sum from them which is helpful, I just have to be very careful with my money. I receive money from the SIBSS as well. When I applied, they asked me to fill out a form. I felt guilty about doing this because I did not really feel like I should be entitled to anything. According to them, I had been infected quite severely and they contacted the hospital and got my notes. As I was badly infected I was awarded £1,000 per year for three years. Dr Crofton told me about SIBSS. He sent them a letter on my behalf and then they got in touch with me where I gave them a statement about myself and the state of my health. They already had some information about me from my consultant, and after that my application went through. The process of applying was quite easy. They check with your GP and hospital that everything is as is it should be. It was very simple. I just gave them the information, they looked into it and then I received a letter telling me what I was entitled to.

31. I also received money from the Skipton Fund. Again, it was my consultant that made me aware of the fund. He wrote to them on my behalf as well. I have received £50,000 from the Skipton Fund in total. I recieved £20,000 in March 2004 initially and then after the Penrose Inquiry, I received the final £30,000. That came in handy because I had a lot of work needing done around the house, it was falling apart. The majority of that money is gone now because of the work I needed done.

32. I couldn't say a word against either of the schemes, they were both really good. The money I have received has helped me out a lot.

Section 8. Other Issues

33. I think there should be more help out there for people infected with hepatitis C. For example, I have been on my own since my husband died. There needs to be more help for people who are going through this. I've been lucky that I have my family around me but some people don't have that.

34. I do not wish my statement to be anonymous.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 15/7/20