

Witness Name: George
Reisenman

Statement No.: WITN2870001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 11 August 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEORGE REISENMAN

Section 1. Introduction

I, George Reisenman, will say as follows.

1. My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry.
2. I live in Liverpool and have four children, five grandchildren and two great grandchildren.
3. I am retired. I worked as a Laboratory Assistant at Liverpool Polytechnic from 1979 until 1996, when I retired.

Section 2. How Affected

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

5. My wife, Josephine Mary Reisenman, sadly passed away 44 years ago on 3rd June 1976 at Sefton General Hospital, Sefton Park. My wife was only 40 years old at the time of her death.
6. I met Josie in London in 1969. I had only just moved to the UK and was beginning to learn English at that time, but we could understand each other and fell in love. Josie was Catholic and I was Jewish, and she had only recently left the Sisters of Mercy Convent. Soon after we met I converted to Catholicism. In 1969 we travelled to Argentina and got married there in 1970. We returned to the UK straight after our honeymoon to make our home here. Our first child was born in GRO-C in October 1970.
7. My wife was a unique and exceptional person. She was very loved by her friends and family and had a wonderful way with children.
8. We had four children together and she was always very healthy: she exercised regularly and could always outrun me. She never drank to excess or smoked heavily and had no serious health conditions. When we first met she had just left the convent, so she had led a very sheltered life.
9. My wife gave birth to our fourth child, a son, on GRO-C 1975. She required a caesarean in order to deliver our son and was given a blood transfusion. Other than the slight loss of blood requiring the transfusion, there were no complications to the delivery and she was discharged home. I think the birth took place either at Oxford Street or Mill Lane Hospital. Both of these hospitals had maternity units, but both have subsequently closed.
10. Neither my wife nor I were given any information or advice before the transfusion about the risk of being exposed to infection.

11. As a result of the blood transfusion, I believe my wife 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.
12. Shortly after the birth of our son I recall my wife becoming increasingly unwell. I was surprised how quickly she became ill.
13. I remember saying to my wife that she had lost weight and her skin was becoming yellow, and I urged her to go to the doctor. Eventually we did go to the doctor together. The doctor decided to admit my wife to Sefton General Hospital for observation.
14. When she was admitted it became clear that the doctors knew something was wrong. A liver biopsy was carried out. One of the consultants was a Dr Turner. I remember Dr Turner saying he couldn't tell me anything other than that her liver was 'rough' and had no flexibility. Hepatitis was mentioned, and my wife and I both understood that this was very bad news and that there was little that could be done for her. I do not know whether any other tests, other than the biopsy, were done. My stepfather was a doctor and I explained this to Dr Turner and asked if he could tell me what was wrong so that I could tell my stepfather, but Dr Turner said that he couldn't tell me anything other than her liver was rough.
15. My wife was very close to dying and she asked me to go to church and say prayers for us all. It was a matter of weeks before her death. I was very shocked. I did not know what had happened, and though I tried to find answers from the treating doctors, I was unable to find out why she had died, other than what is on her death certificate, which is exhibited to my daughter's witness statement. The cause of death was recorded as I (a) Acute Hepatic Failure, (b) Ischaemic Active Hepatitis. At the time my spoken and written English was still limited and everything happened so quickly that I did not understand what the death certificate meant.

16. As I have set out above, my wife was fit and healthy at the time she gave birth to our fourth child on GRO-C 1975, yet she died seven months later. My son was not infected with HBV, which I believe he would have been if my wife had HBV prior to giving birth. As my wife 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, and that, in turn, this caused the acute hepatic failure she suffered.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. As described above, I believe my wife 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

18. I do not know whether my wife 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

19. My wife did not have time to adjust to the impact of her illness on her life, as she died so quickly after becoming unwell.
20. I had been very upset to see her so unwell in the weeks and months before she died. She lost weight and turned yellow.
21. I was deeply shocked by her death and I think I probably suffered a nervous breakdown. Things were in chaos and I remember not knowing

where I was and losing track of time. I was unable to express myself emotionally and would simply explode, people thought I had a screw loose. I still suffer with her loss, 44 years later.

22. When she died, our four children were aged five and under. I could not manage to look after the children on my own and could not explain to them why we had lost her, because I didn't understand why myself. At the time I did not have a permanent job and was struggling financially. I contacted social services and asked for help. I desperately did not want my children to be taken into care. Social services did not support me to look after them, instead taking them into foster care. We were lucky that the children remained together whilst in care, and I visited them in their foster home every day after I finished work.
23. Our children have suffered greatly in losing their mother. Not only have they missed a lifetime of her love and affection, but they have also suffered, sometimes getting into trouble, being rebellious and becoming very isolated. My wife was so sociable and gentle, I don't think this would have happened if she had been there to guide them. I now have great-grand-children and wish she was here to see them.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

24. Unfortunately, my wife did not live long enough for there to be time for treatment. Counselling or psychological support has never been made available either to my wife before her death, or to me or any of our children afterwards.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. My wife received no financial assistance and neither has any of the family.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. It has not been possible to obtain any of my wife's medical records and I am suspicious that they have been intentionally destroyed.
27. I hope the Inquiry will address this terrible miscarriage of justice.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed :

GRO-C

Dated11 August 2020.....