

Witness Name: Paul Hamilton

Statement No.: **WITN5759001**

Exhibits: nil

Dated: 1 July 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAUL HAMILTON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 14 June 2021.

I, Paul Hamilton, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Paul Hamilton. My date of birth is GRO-C 1972 and my address is GRO-C
GRO-C. I am married with two children. Martha, my step daughter is 22 and has just graduated as a nurse and GRO- is 11. My wife Jean and I have been married for 10 years and were together for 5 years before.
2. I was born and raised by my parents in South London and attended school there. My parents had a happy marriage and we always had a loving family home environment. My sister Jane is 4 years older than me and she also now lives in Kent.
3. I have always worked in London and in the printing industry. I started at Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) where I was responsible for printing official

documents and Hansard reports, before moving into the private sector where I have mainly worked for corporate law firms. I have also been a professional photographer.

4. After I met my wife Jean, we decided to settle in GRO-C Kent. In 2018-2019, we spent a year living in the Philippines GRO-C
GRO-C
5. I intend to speak about my late father Thomas Hamilton. Dad was born on GRO-C 1943 and sadly passed away on 20 December 2016, at the age of 73. He was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV), as a result of receiving a blood transfusion after an appendectomy.
6. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him, me, the family and our lives together.
7. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.
8. My mother, Brenda Hamilton has detailed how my father came to be diagnosed with HCV. I am only aware of the information that was relayed to me at the time as I was not present during the hospital appointments, so please refer to her statement, **WITN4938001** for a fully comprehensive account.
9. My own recollections are quite hazy and tend to merge at times, due to having a busy home and work life, obvious gaps in my direct knowledge and I suppose the way the mind filters things, when memories of family health and wellbeing are really quite tough. I will do my best to provide a coherent account from my own perspective, which is something that I feel very moved to do.

Section 2. How Infected

10. My father never used intravenous drugs, never received any medical treatment abroad or indulged in any of the other lifestyle causes of the infection. He contracted HCV through no fault of his own from NHS provided blood.
11. The first potential instance where my father could have contracted HCV was in 1968, during surgery to remove varicose veins.
12. The route thought most likely by the medics, was when my father had a second operation in 1985 – he was rushed into hospital with severe appendicitis and underwent an appendectomy. I would have been 13 years old at the time and distinctly remember being at an Arsenal v Hereford FA cup match at Highbury, Arsenal's old stadium in North London. I returned home and was told that Dad had been rushed into hospital for an emergency operation. I admit that I did not think too much of it at the time and he seemingly recovered well from the procedure.
13. My father was a very hard worker – he had been a drayman for Carlsberg and later became a postman. His post round covered Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, as well as other high profile addresses. Dad worked long shifts and did not rest on his time off. He was very active outside of work and continued to play football for a local pub until his mid-40s. He loved the sun and we had many holidays abroad – he and I even had a month together in Tenerife. Dad purchased my first camera and took me to Scotland every year for my photography hobby – he very much encouraged my interests and I have since photographed professionally.
14. After the appendectomy there was no initial effect on my father and I do not recall any health complaints.
15. When I was in my mid-late 20s I started to notice changes in my father's health. He started to experience pain in his hips and had one side replaced in his late 40s/ early 50s. I did not think much of the procedure because Dad was never one to complain. Later, in 1996 and on our holiday together in Tenerife, he started to

experience pain in his side. In hindsight, probably the early indication of his liver problems.

16. In 2005 Dad was told that he had a tumour on his liver, 3-5cm in size. Initially he took the news of the diagnosis quite well and I offered to donate part of my liver to him if it was a match. I would have been about 33 years old. Unfortunately, it subsequently became clear that the tumour had grown too large and the only option was a liver transplant, so he was put on the list. He had not been cleared of his HCV.
17. Not long after being told about the tumour, my father was diagnosed with HCV. I guess it must have been part of the testing that he had undergone. I distinctly remember him commenting that the doctor had said that by looking at the viral load, Dad had been infected for 15-20 years. This would correlate with the date of the appendectomy. He was informed that the liver tumour was directly attributable to the HCV virus.
18. Dad must have been devastated and shocked when he found out he had HCV, though he made little of it. He was a very private man and we as a family never asked him how he felt about it all, but I do remember him questioning how he would have contracted the virus. My wife often queries why we never discussed these matters as a family but I believe deep down my father was devastated and probably embarrassed to share that knowledge with his children. I think he knew a lot more about his prognosis at that time, than he let on to any of us.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. As far as I am aware Dad did not contract any other infections other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

20. My Mum, Brenda Hamilton has covered the topic of consent in her statement, **WITN4938001**. I do not have any direct information to give regarding this aspect.

Section 5. Impact

21. In 1996 my father was medically retired from the Post Office. He had to walk miles every day and could no longer cope. My parents sold their property in South London for a good price and moved close to me in Kent where they were able to live mortgage free. He was diagnosed with the liver cancer and HCV after they had moved.
22. After Dad was diagnosed with HCV, I was still fairly optimistic about his health and continued to conduct work and home life as though there was no real problem. For years, I continued to phone home on a regular basis and speak to mainly mum, to check how Dad was health wise, but she and he would always reply that he was fine.
23. My father had always been a very strong and clear minded man but his infection with HCV did affect him. Throughout his life he had always been a very sociable person, but this reversed with the infection. He changed from his happy go lucky character and he was not the same person. He eventually stopped wanting to go on holiday and became tired, lethargic, frail and reclusive.
24. My father waited 12-14 months on the liver transplant list and the procedure went ahead during 2006. He was blue lighted down the M20 from GRO-C to Kings College Hospital. I received a call from my mother to say that Dad was being admitted for the transplant and then I went to work to do my usual night shift that evening. I think looking back that I was still in denial at this point, I certainly did not comprehend the seriousness of the procedure, which seems so ridiculous now.
25. I went to visit Dad in intensive care in the morning after work and I recall it all being very surreal. You had to walk through these plastic doors into a big open room, with Dad on a bed in the middle. There was a lot of equipment around his bed and he had tubes and wires attached to him. It was like a scene from a sci-fi film. After he came around, I remember him saying "I'll put my shoes on and we'll go to the

pub for a pint of Budweiser, shall we?". This was a bit weird, he was in no fit state and he never drank Budweiser anyway. It was obviously the medication talking.

26. My wife was pregnant with our daughter GRO-C at the time of Dad's liver transplant and I remember her saying he was hanging on to meet his grandchild. Being a nurse, Jean would remind me about the seriousness of the procedure, but me being a glass half full, optimistic sort of person I thought he would be fine. I was probably the calmest about the liver transplant and thought Dad would bounce back to his usual self. I was in denial, I just never believed that anything would happen to him. Thank god the liver took to his body and he seemingly at the time, made a miraculous recovery.
27. My father had constant hospital appointments after the transplant and my mother would accompany him. On occasions my wife would attend to give my mother a break, as my sister and I were always at work. Mum commented after one of the appointments that there was bad news about my father's viral load but that the consultant used a lot of medical jargon that my father did not fully understand.
28. Timing wise I am unsure but post-transplant my father underwent a course of chemotherapy which was administered via a tube. He attended Kings for regular check-ups and during one of these appointments, I don't know how long after the transplant, Dr Heaton told him that the cancer had spread to the rest of his body. I noticed that Dad became even more withdrawn around this period, but I put this down to the direct impact of the chemotherapy.
29. In terms of treatment for the HCV; Dad had to wait some years after he was first diagnosed with the HCV before treatment was offered, certainly after his transplant. He had a course of Ribavirin and Interferon and I remember my parents being told that the treatment would cost in excess of £36,000. My mother administered the injections of Interferon, but she was never really given a proper demonstration of how to do it. Unfortunately, this treatment was unsuccessful.
30. A second treatment was offered in 2014 as part of a drug trial. As a family we told him not to go through another round of treatment, but he was a fighter and very optimistic about the trial. Dad agreed to participate in the clinical trial and attended

a medical examination at Harley Street. He experienced a lot of side effects from the trial – his skin started to peel off, he lost a lot of weight and his personality changed drastically – he became grumpy and short tempered. The trial was stopped because of the effect on his skin. Sadly, my father never cleared the virus and the infection had inevitably started to attack the new liver.

31. Towards the end of his life, Dad became very confused and we thought he had dementia. He became very distant our relationship became drastically different. At times he would ask about my daughter's name. No medical professional ever mentioned the term 'brain fog', which I now understand to be an associated symptom of HCV.
32. In the run-up to my father's death in 2016 he had two stays in hospital. During the first stay, my mother suffered a nervous breakdown and was admitted to The Orchards – a mental health facility in Maidstone Hospital. She did have pre-existing issues but reached a point where she could no longer cope with my father's deterioration – she was his full-time carer throughout his ill health. In retrospect, my sister and I were not as supportive as we should have been and would have liked to have been, because of our own work and family commitments at the time.
33. I remember turning up to work one night when my parents had both been taken into two different parts of the same hospital. They asked me what I was doing there and told me to go home and to come back when things were sorted. They were very supportive.
34. When Dad was ready to be discharged, my Mum was still in hospital. She was very worried over this but I told her to concentrate on getting better herself. He ended up staying at our house until she was ready to come home. Dad was bed ridden and deteriorated further during this time – my wife had to wash and spoon feed him. I recall when the district nurses came out to assess him, Dad became rather nasty towards them and commented that he did not require their help. There were times when he would hallucinate because of the medication and we had a debate over a horseracing bet and he spoke of a newspaper that did not exist. He looked like a skeleton and eventually could not see or speak.

35. Once Mum was discharged, Dad went back home with her but within a couple of days she phoned up to say that he was refusing to eat. The whole family went to the house and a doctor was called. We were all gathered around his bedside and he had an involuntary 'toilet' accident. The doctor assessed the situation and decided to call an ambulance. He was readmitted to Maidstone hospital and never came back out.
36. About a week before he passed away, Dad was diagnosed with lymphoma and we were told it was a result of the HCV infection and the liver cancer. Despite the liver transplant, the lymphoma was a secondary cancer to the original tumour. He became unresponsive and unable to converse because the cancer had gone to his brain. I remember him ripping tubes off his body and they had to be reinserted into his feet, where I suppose he could not reach them.
37. I visited Dad in hospital every day and would walk him to the toilet – at this stage he really was not the 'Dad' I knew. I was with my mum and Jane on the day that he died. After it got quite late the nurse suggested to us to go home. We ended up returning to our separate homes and within a couple of hours we received a phone call to say that Dad had passed away. I phoned Mum straight away, she had had an identical call, as had my sister. I picked everyone up before we went back to the hospital. Jean and I left the children at home with a neighbour. It was very, very sad and it hurts to recall it.
38. I remember a palliative care team member saying it was common for someone to pass away when the family were not present. They must have known when they suggested that we went home that night.
39. After my father passed away, it hit me very hard. I was provided with grievance counselling from my GP. Initially the appointments were 2 hours in duration, but decreased as time went on. It took me 2 years to get through the initial grieving stage. I was affected quite badly – I tried hard to carry on as normal but I felt as though something was pulling me back. I became very depressed.
40. I would experience vivid flashbacks of what happened to my father and I became moody towards my wife and children and was certainly a different person for a

couple of years. My father's death removed any sense of caring about anything even to the point of my own family at the time, even though they meant, and still mean the absolute world to me.

41. To this day, I feel guilty over my father's illness and death and feel that I should have done more at the time. Naively, I did not realise the seriousness of his condition and I did not fully acknowledge what was happening. It must have been horrendous for him.
42. I could not go back to work immediately after my father passed away. They were very good about this and I was initially offered to get assistance on the company health plan. However, this did not materialise as I was not covered under the policy. I was off work for most of the 2 years. I received full pay for 56 weeks, but the amount decreased after this point. There was a huge impact on our household finances, but I just did not care – I was still grieving. My wife was very supportive and ended up working 2 jobs during this period, but she became exhausted and did not like what was happening to me.
43. I have now come to terms with everything that happened and have learnt a lot about things since. I became a Christian 2 years ago and this has helped me. I now look forward to every single day. My Dad is still in my memory, the good parts and the times when he was very ill.
44. Both my children were affected by my father's HCV infection and death. My step daughter used to speak to him every day as she knew back then that she wanted to be a nurse and took interest in his health. Martha has now graduated as a nurse. My father had a great relationship with my daughters and attended all of their birthday parties. My youngest GRO-C was born after he was diagnosed with HCV and therefore grew up witnessing his deterioration. She lost her grandad at a very young age GRO-C is GRO-C

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

45. My father was never offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of his HCV infection.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

46. I believe my father found out about the Skipton Fund from an oncology nurse and he was insistent on applying because he should have never been given infected blood in the first place. I assisted him with the application forms and the first application was made in 2005.
47. The initial application was unsuccessful, we had no evidence of Dad's blood transfusion but Dad's specialist assessed from the papers that he most likely had one during his appendectomy in 1985, so we appealed in 2009. This was also rejected.
48. Since my mother provided a statement to the Inquiry, I decided to make an application to the England Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS). The forms are currently with the doctor to endorse or approve and will be submitted imminently. The lady from EIBSS was very helpful on the phone and provided guidance for the application form. I will update the Inquiry investigator of how this application progresses.

Section 8. Other Issues

49. I would like to close my statement by saying this; I know that my Mum (Brenda), has given her statement and has commented on the impact that Dad's infection and subsequent death had and continues to have upon her. I have watched this and have been part of it and the impact on my mother has indirectly impacted on me and the rest of the family. We have had to watch her health go downhill as she stoically and dutifully tried to care for Dad, at times shielding the rest of the family from the extent of his condition and state of her own mental health.

50. With regard to the direct impact that Dad's condition and passing has had on me, it has been quite profound. Before his condition took a grip, Dad was a wonderful involved and active father, taking great interest in me and my aspirations and he used to go out of his way to ensure that I could fulfil my potential and chosen path in life. We did things together, he was very much hands on when he was at home and not working. He wasn't a complex man, he worked hard, loved his family and was always available to do whatever was needed. He never sat still, he was fit and 'on the go' the whole time, even playing football in his forties. His HCV infection changed all of this.

51. We can now look back on the slow almost imperceptible deterioration since his appendectomy operation in 1985. He was a shadow of his former self, his character changed completely, he became introverted and skeletal in appearance towards the end. Apart from this being tragic to watch, we were deprived of the years before his premature passing during which he was unable to be Mum's husband, our Dad and the Grandad to my kids.

52. Mum suffered from severe mental ill health, Dad's condition being to a large extent responsible, such was the pressure that it put her under. Personally, I now realise that I had my head in the sand, while trying to deal with work and family life, happy to believe that when mum told me that Dad was 'ok', he was. It's the way we dealt with things. This has led to feelings of guilt that I should have paid more attention and it all came to a head after my father died. I plummeted into a pit of grief and spent 2 years not really caring about anything and it took a lot of counselling and support from family and my employer to pull me through. I think I am ok now but it has been tough and my family and my faith has helped me pull through. None of this brings my Dad back or the lost years though.

53. None of the hundreds of people affected by this scandal should have been put through this, because nobody should have been exposed to infections in blood provided by our National Health Service. Compensation for my Mum is not a replacement for her husband of over 55 years but it is the only thing left that may make bereaved loved one's lives easier, particularly in old age. It will also signify

acceptance of responsibility by the government of a huge and cataclysmic wrong by previous governments.

54. I cannot even begin to comprehend how the contaminated blood scandal was allowed to happen. Thousands of people and their families have been affected as a result and the least they can do is take responsibility and properly compensate people.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C _____

Dated *01.07.2021*