

Witness Name: Anthony Cullinane

Statement No.: WITN5989001

Exhibits: **WITN5989002-5**

Dated: 8 September 2021

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANTHONY CULLINANE**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 06 August 2021.

I, Anthony Cullinane, will say as follows:

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Anthony Cullinane. My date of birth is **GRO-C** 1943 and I live at an address known to the Inquiry. I work in the jewellery trade and have done so since 1964. I live a very solitary life which has suited me.
2. I intend to discuss my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") which I contracted from a blood transfusion during treatment following a major heart attack in 1984. In particular, I will speak about the nature of my illness, how it affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on me.
3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to seek legal representation. The Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me and I do not wish to be anonymous. I would be happy to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

4. I can also confirm that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the 'Right to Reply' procedure and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. My witness statement has been provided without referring to my medical records. Some of these events took place a very long time ago and therefore, I have been able to provide timeframes accurate within a week of taking place, and I have recalled the following events to the best of my knowledge.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

6. In 1984, I had a major heart attack and on 4 September 1984, I had surgery to repair the damage from the attack. I had coronary artery bypass surgery at Harefield Hospital. I was given a blood transfusion during the heart surgery, which I later found was the source of my hepatitis C infection. I have exhibited a letter [WITN5989002] to the Inquiry dated 22 May 2018 from Dr M J Van Der Watt, Consultant Cardiologist from Watford General Hospital to Dr N Small of Schopwick Surgery. This letter documents a consultation with Dr M J Van Der Watt detailing my bypass surgery and the origin of the hepatitis C infection.
7. The bypass surgery went fantastically well and they did what they intended to do. I spent a total of seventeen days in the hospital to recover from the surgery, but it took me around six months to feel recovered. I was unconscious during most of the stay and this was highlighted to me during a visit from my friend Brian. He told me that I had been admitted for two weeks but I had been under the impression that it had been only a week.
8. In early December 1984, I was admitted back to Watford General Hospital, previously known as Peace Memorial Hospital with a viral infection. I was administered medication, and after a couple of weeks once I was feeling better, I was sent home. I was then re-admitted a couple of weeks later and given the same treatment.

9. In January 1985, I returned to Watford General Hospital with a viral infection. I was suffering from heavy perspiration during this time with a really high temperature and it was really uncomfortable. Over a period of eleven months, I was admitted to hospital a total of five times for the viral infections and the initial surgery.
10. In hindsight, I believe that these incidents of viral infections must have been linked to the hepatitis C infection.
11. Over the next couple of years, I would attend for check-ups at Watford General Hospital. I'm unsure what they were for but I assumed were part and parcel of the heart bypass surgery. There was a long period of time where I was attending for check-ups before the hepatitis C infection was found.
12. During a particular appointment in around 1990, the doctor explained that he wanted to carry out some routine blood tests on me. I followed his directions and got them done at Watford General Hospital. I was later called back in for more blood tests and there the nurse asked me "why are you being tested for hepatitis C", and I replied "I don't know". At this point, I did not even know what hepatitis was. I then went back to my GP for the results, and he informed me that I had hepatitis C.
13. I was fully informed of the risks of having hepatitis. Further to this, I am sure that I was provided with some documentation stating the risks of transmission. I was very fortunate that my GP was so brilliant with the diagnosis. Dr Andrew Wilson was a brilliant doctor and I had great confidence in him; he knew exactly what he was doing.
14. I was referred to the Hepatitis Clinic at St Mary's Hospital and to Dr Foster. He was a good doctor. The opinion was that I had contracted it from transfused blood at Harefield Hospital during my bypass surgery. I was fully informed about hepatitis by Dr Foster, but I was told there was no cure for it at this time.

15. A couple of years later, Dr Foster from the Hepatitis Clinic left, and was replaced by Dr Ashley Brown. He turned out to be brilliant and has been a diamond in my care.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

16. As far as I am aware, I did not contract any other infections from the blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

17. I have no issues with consent or whether I was tested without full knowledge.

18. I consented to the heart bypass surgery in 1984, and the blood transfusion was part of this treatment. I was fully consulted by Dr Knight at Harefield Hospital, and I believe that the whole ordeal was thoroughly explained to me. The treatment options were explained to me and I was told that it was my own personal choice whether I wished to go ahead.

### **Section 5. Impact**

19. With reference to the hepatitis C virus itself, I just carried on and I managed to cope quite well with it all.

20. However, I have suffered from further medical complications and conditions as a result. I currently take ten different medications per day and I have a range of various diagnoses including anaemia and hypertension. As far as I am aware these are not serious diagnoses but something that I live with on a daily basis. A detailed list of my diagnoses and medication can be found at **exhibit WITN5989003**. This is a letter from Dr Mike Bellamy, Cardiology Consultant, Hammersmith Hospital to Dr Smith of Schopwick Surgery, entitled "Outpatient Clinic".

21. As a result of my infection, I developed cirrhosis of the liver which has since led to hepatocellular carcinoma. Hepatocellular carcinoma is a cancer of the liver. I have never received any treatment for the cirrhosis but through my regular appointments they keep checks on its development.
22. I shall now explain how I became aware of the liver cancer. Overtime, my bypass surgery was slowly beginning to break down and the vein grafts began to fail which I noticed through becoming short of breath and slight angina symptoms. In 2018, I instigated some research into what was wrong with my heart and I had some tests done privately at the Spire Hospital. The Spire Hospital discovered a suspicious lesion in my liver. I was not looking to see what was wrong with my liver, I was looking for my heart function to improve. So, it was a shock and surprise to find that they had discovered a tumour. I spent just under £12,000 on private consultations at The Spire Hospital.
23. The Spire Hospital provided me with a report to pass to my doctor at the liver clinic. I attended an appointment with Professor Brown at St Mary's Hospital to alert him to the findings in the report. He took a look at the report and said, "we should have done this." The clinic had been regularly testing my bloods for hepatitis C.
24. I was quickly placed back into the system and sent for an MRI scan. This returned with findings of: a 2cm hepatocellular carcinoma in my liver. Please see **exhibit WITN5989005**, which details these findings and a record of the consultation following my investigations with The Spire Hospital. Fortunately, the liver cancer was found very early.
25. Dr Pai called me in for an appointment one day. He sat me down knee to knee and said to me, "you have hepatocellular carcinoma, do you know what that is?". I replied, "I actually, I do, it is primary liver cancer." He then explained to me that it is linked to hepatitis C, and that it is a typical cancer following this infection.

26. I was then sent to Professor Sahid Khan of the cancer unit at Hammersmith Hospital. He has such a great presence and he is another diamond to the profession. He got my treatment going very quickly from our very first appointment.
27. Treatment options were described to me: one was to cut out a big piece of my liver and the other was to put a microwave needle into the tumour and burn it away. Please see **exhibit WITN5989005**, which details these treatment options. He explained that the second option would be the best for me because I only had one tumour and so it would be less invasive.
28. I had the first treatment done in November at St Mary's Hospital. However, I was then required to have a second further treatment carried out in the early part of 2019. I had the second treatment carried out because there was an opinion that they did not get the full tumour the first time round. Please see **exhibit WITN5989004**, which documents these procedures in a letter from Professor Ashley Brown, Consultant Hepatologist, St Mary's Hospital to Dr Smith, Schopwick Surgery.
29. The final treatment had successfully removed the tumour. However, during the process of removing the tumour, my lung had collapsed and then spontaneously reinflated itself. I was discharged within three days of the surgery.
30. Following the treatment, it was explained that I may experience flu symptoms, and they were right, those symptoms hit me for weeks. I was released on the Wednesday and by the Friday, I felt really unwell and very nauseous. I called a nurse in Hammersmith Hospital, and she told me to visit my GP. However, I did not want to go to my GP because it has always been such a struggle to get an appointment due to the reception staff and the way that I was feeling, I could not face it. I had a friend drop me to Watford Hospital's Accident and Emergency. I was instantly taken by the arm by a triage nurse, and I was admitted for investigations. I had not even waited and so I must have looked very unwell.

31. They scanned my chest and discovered my lung had again collapsed. They told me that I had a hole in my lung which was leaking water into my chest cavity. As a result, they inserted a drain into my chest and for the next five days I was walking about the hospital with a tank to drain the fluid.
32. Moving forward, since the tumour treatment, I go back to Hammersmith Hospital every three months for scans to be carried out. But at some point, I will have scans less regularly, being every six months.
33. I feel very positive about the tumour treatment. I understand that the liver has an incredible ability to heal itself, but the cirrhosis is still there.
34. In around April 1999, I started on the new interferon and ribavirin treatment. When I was informed that there was treatment available for the hepatitis, it felt great to have something finally happening rather than, "I'll see you again in six months."
35. However, I quickly became aware of talk that the percentage of success was said to be much higher than it actually was. I watched a television programme one night which said that the figure was actually forty-five percent that the treatment would work and not fifty-five per cent.
36. I was shown by the nurse how to inject the medicine and I found that it was the easiest thing in the world to administer. I actually still have the box at home which held the interferon syringe.
37. I was genome three and so I was placed on the six-month treatment plan. I lasted thirteen weeks on the programme. I really fell apart and got very ill from it, and I did some crazy things during that time. I was always good with my memory, however that completely changed, and I was doing things that didn't make any sense. The side-effects to the medication were very difficult for me.
38. For example, I completely lost my sense of spatial awareness, which I discovered initially during a trip to Safeway supermarket. I got out of my car and

realised that I had driven to the wrong supermarket. I got back in the car and had difficulty parking in the available space or even work out where the bay actually was. It was a really strange experience.

39. I was doing very strange irrational things during this time. One more example of this, is when a friend had taken me to Boots in Watford to attend an eye test. We were going up a large escalator between the two floors. I suddenly fell back down the escalator. I had collapsed out of nowhere, falling backwards and I was grabbing the rails trying to pull myself up.

40. I developed large patches of eczema on my hands, in my hair and I came out with a lobster pink rash. I would attend appointments with the doctor regularly and one day I went in and revealed my eczema. The doctors said to me, "if that gets infected you could lose all of your skin and so you have to stop." They then stopped the interferon first, and the following week I returned and they decided to stop the ribavirin too. It was a frightening time being told that I could die due to the eczema, therefore had no choice but to end the treatment.

41. The hepatitis C treatment's side-effects took a year to recover from.

42. In around 2015, I was offered a second hepatitis C treatment. I was already aware of the new treatment and so I had been waiting for it to become available. Eventually, I got on the treatment programme using sofosbuvir and at one point there were two other drugs but I am unsure of their names.

43. I was supported through the twelve-week treatment. A very nice nurse told me to look after the medication and I was given a month supply at a time which I would safely store in my fridge.

44. The treatment was extremely effective and I did not experience any side-effects. Within the first month there was a dramatic change to the virus in my system. I took the drugs religiously, exactly as instructed, day after day. They knew after a month from the blood tests that the virus was disappearing, and so I was given the next two months' worth of pills. I made it through to the end



of the treatment and I was told that the virus had disappeared. Following this, I continue to have regular hepatitis C tests now and they continue to return negative.

45. I would say that I am a depressive and sometimes I can get very depressed. I manage to cope as I know that it will eventually pass and I will be alright. Some days you have good days and others you are in the pits. I am unsure whether this was as a result of the hepatitis C.

46. I think the infection has affected me mentally, but I just get on with it. With the things you have no choice about, I get on with it and just keep going. My positive outlook has helped me through this.

47. Socially, I was always very open with it. I did not hide that I had hepatitis C virus, like many people do.

48. I am fully aware that there is a terrible stigma attached to hepatitis C, which has even applied to those that innocently contracted the infection through blood transfusions. However, I have suffered no stigma, that I know of. I have never experienced anything negative at all. I have always been upfront with everybody, and always for example told nurses about the diagnosis.

49. I am still able to work. I have worked predominantly from home for a very long time. I have no intention of stopping my work and no thoughts of retiring, however, I have slowed down over time.

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

50. As mentioned, I attend for appointments every three months at St Mary's Hospital. During these appointments, my liver is scanned and my blood is tested. If there were any signs of the hepatitis C then it would show up on these results.

51. I have never received any treatment for the cirrhosis of the liver and I believe there is no treatment for this, but I believe that the regular scans are for the cirrhosis.
52. I haven't had much to do with my GP in relation to my liver. It seemed like they did not know much about it and have never done anything to treat my cirrhosis. However, I attend appointments the liver clinic on a regular basis as well as the cancer clinic.
53. I never faced any obstacles in terms of receiving other treatments or the treatment for hepatitis C. I believe that I have been treated extremely well and I have no complaints at all.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

54. In 2003, I was driving my car listening to the radio, and by chance I heard someone speaking about hepatitis and blood transfusions. I heard them say that there is funding available from something called 'The Skipton Fund' for those that have been infected by transfusion. For the rest of the journey, I kept saying to myself "do not forget The Skipton fund" and as soon as I was home and near a pen, I wrote it down.
55. I telephoned The Skipton Fund and the person that I spoke to was very helpful and advised me what to do.
56. I passed the application form for stage one to my doctor at the liver clinic and she filled out the paperwork and attached all the evidence. I did the same for the second form for stage two.
57. The Skipton Fund's first stage one payment was issued to me in around 2004.
58. I was initially refused on the stage two payment which was an application completed by Professor Brown from the liver clinic. He was required to provide a witness statement to support my application, however it deferred. Sometime

later, once I was aware of my liver cancer, I printed the form again and delivered it straight to Professor Brown at the clinic. He submitted the form and I was issued with the stage two Skipton payments.

59. In 2004, I received a one-off stage one payment from Skipton of £20,000. I now receive stage two quarterly payments of around £7,170 per quarter and a £540 heating allowance. A couple of years ago, I received a one-off payment of £50,000.

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

60. All the staff at St Mary's, Hammersmith and Charring Cross Hospital have provided the highest quality of care to me on all my visits. I received fantastic care from Professor Brown of St Mary's Hospital and I have no complaints whatsoever. I am a firm believer that if you do as you are directed by the clinician then you will receive the best treatment and care. I have always taken medications and followed instructions precisely. I have also always been a polite patient and respected the clinicians. I believe that this has had an impact on my care. During one of my hospital stays at Hammersmith, I was treated with such care and was even provided with my own private room.

61. I would like the Inquiry to find out if people knew whether the blood was infected. I personally think that deep down people knew that it was infected, however I believe that patients were going to: bleed to death, die or be transfused. It is not for me to judge whether it was right or wrong, but that is what I think has happened.

62. I hope that people will be satisfied and happy with the Inquiry's findings and that they will accept the results.

**Table of Exhibits:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>
22 May 2018	<p>Letter from Dr M J Van Der Watt, Consultant Cardiologist, Watford Hospital to Dr N Small, Schopwick Surgery.</p> <p>Details Anthony Cullinane's bypass surgery and the origin of the hepatitis C infection.</p>	<b>WITN5989002</b>
10 February 2021	<p>Letter from Dr Mike Bellamy, Cardiology Consultant, Hammersmith Hospital to Dr Smith of Schopwick Surgery.</p> <p>Detailed list of Anthony Cullinane's diagnoses and medication.</p>	<b>WITN5989003</b>
04 March 2019	<p>Letter from Professor Ashley Brown, Consultant Hepatologist, St Mary's Hospital to Dr Smith, Schopwick Surgery.</p> <p>Details Anthony Cullinane's undergone HCC treatment and the remaining residual tumour.</p>	<b>WITN5989004</b>
10 October 2018	<p>Letter from Isabella Reccia, Hammersmith Hospital to Dr Smith, Schopwick Surgery.</p>	<b>WITN5989005</b>

	<p>Details Anthony Cullinane's HCV cirrhosis of the liver, treatment options for hepatocellular carcinoma and the abnormalities in the liver.</p>	
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**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

8/09/2021