Witness Name: Robert Ellinor
Statement No.: WITN7082001
Exhibits: WITN7082002-6
Dated: 6th July 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROBERT ELLINOR

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11 April 2022.

I, Robert Ellinor, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Robert Cyril Ellinor. I was born on GRO-C 1955 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live in West Sussex having quite recently returned to the UK following 30 years of living in Singapore. I am a retired Engineer.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C (HCV) which I contracted through infected blood. In particular, I would like to talk about the nature of the illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received, and the impact the infection had on me and my family.

3. This witness statement has been provided without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

4. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I have not been involved in prior litigation. I do not intend on being anonymous. I am

not embarrassed about what happened to me and I happy to have my story published in full.

5. 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.

6. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However I can only recall to the best of my ability, and these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.

Section 2. How Infected

7. I was born and brought up in Bristol. When I was a child, I lived in a newly built post-war council house with my parents, which had a porch at the entrance.

8. I was always a bit clumsy when I was young, and I was often having little accidents here and there.

9. When I was about 5 years old, I ran out of the porch and fell, hitting the edge of a brick wall at full force. I have forgotten a lot of what happened on that day, but I know I suffered a significant blow to the head and as a result, did a lot of damage.

10. I caused a lot of damage to my head, in particular the top of my head and internal and external damage to my forehead and my face including my sinuses. I still have the scars **(See Exhibit WITN7082002).** I also developed hearing problems as a result. Furthermore, I was susceptible to regular infections for which I would be prescribed antibiotics.

11. Another consequence was severe facial pain and I would have to use heat pads on my face to soothe it. This treatment was prescribed and carried out at the local Cosham Hospital, which is now part of the North Bristol Trust. The treatment went on for a number of years with little or no improvement.

12. I had to sit at the front of the class as I couldn't hear properly, and I constantly had to go for hearing tests.

13. When I got older, I had to have two operations to repair both the internal and external damage to my facial area.

14. I had the first operation at Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, in the Summer of 1970. I understand Frenchay Hospital is now part of the North Bristol NHS Trust. The operation was Facial Cranial Reconstruction surgery, and the aim was to improve my hearing and constant sinus infections. This surgery went well, but I had to stay in the hospital for a while afterwards as I needed intravenous antibiotics. I was discharged and continued life as normal.

15. I had been told by my mother I would need to wait until I turned 18 for this operation. However because of my sinus issues, frequent infections and difficulty hearing, they brought it forward. So, I was 15 when the first operation took place.

16. I had my second operation in around October 1973. This was also at Frenchay Hospital. The procedure was again Facial Cranial Reconstruction, and was to make further corrections to my nose shape and internals, primarily to fix the bend in my nose.

17. The second operation was arranged when I was 18. This time, things didn't go so well. Once I woke up, my mother told me that during the operation there had been complications and I lost a lot of blood. So much so, the operation had to be stopped to give me a blood transfusion. I was 18 and I still lived with my parents, so I was still considered a minor at that time. The doctors therefore communicated with my parents rather than me.

18. Following the operation, I ended up having to stay in hospital to recover for two to three weeks.

19. My parents were never asked for permission regarding the transfusion and the fact that there may be any risk attached wasn't mentioned to them.

20. There was only one blood transfusion at that time, and I have never had another one since.

21. I was allowed to go home after the recovery period, and life went back to normal, until I became very unwell a couple of months later.

22. Not long after returning home, I experienced what was commonly referred to at that time as 'Jaundice'. I started experiencing severe stomach pain and I had yellowish eyes. I looked awful. I just remember a terrible feeling of constant internal pain, which included back pain and stomach cramps.

23. My bed was moved from upstairs to downstairs in the living room. People were really worried about me.

24. My GP surgery at the time was Kingswood Surgery on Kingswood High Street. My GP I think was called Dr Black. I was very much known to him at that time as I was quite a regular visitor to his surgery due to the recurrent infections after my accident.

25. Dr Black came to see me every day, so he must have been worried. This was quite out of character for him, as he was not usually a hands-on doctor in that way.

26. He thought it was Weil's Disease, and he never did confirm the actual cause of my symptoms.

27. I did eventually recover from this episode of ill health, and life was able to go back to normal.

28. I met my wife Karen in Bristol in 1975. We got married January 1980, and we went on to have two daughters; Kate Lauren and Anna Elspeth.

29. Kate Lauren, the eldest, was born in 1983 while we were living in the USA – I had moved there with my employment and Anna Elspeth was born in West Sussex, once we had returned to the UK in GRO-C 1987.

30. In 1990, I moved to Singapore with my wife and daughters and life went on.

31. In 2015, I started to feel unwell. I began to get terrible pains and cramps in my back, legs, arms and shoulders. I also started to get bad stomach pains, and I lost a lot of weight rapidly. I went from 75kg to 68kg in 8 weeks. People kept saying 'you're too thin, what's wrong?'

32. I would get particularly bad cramps at night whenever I was lying flat in bed, so my sleep was often disturbed.

33. I was busy with work and travelling, so I relied on Ibuprofen and other over the counter medicines and I didn't do anything else about it for a while. I was working on a big construction industry project involving taking a team from Singapore to Spain, so there was lots of planning and logistical issues to work out.

34. There wasn't enough time for me to think too much about my health, and I assumed the symptoms I was experiencing were because of the amount of walking I was doing and the level of physicality involved in the project. We were building a tunnel, and it was very hot and humid. I was busy with the project so I just put up with it.

35. I was urinating more, especially at night, which caused issues with my wife who was regularly disturbed by my needing to get up to use the toilet.

Furthermore, I remember noticing my urine went very dark. We had a poster up in the toilet area at work to remind us about hydration, and it showed different colours of urine and what it meant. Mine went black.

36. I remember thinking that was not unusual amongst my Muslim colleagues who would frequently get very dehydrated when they were observing Ramadan, but it was very unusual for me, and I found it quite concerning.

37. By 2017, I was regularly having to jump out of bed, then spending an hour or so in great discomfort, feeling like I had broken legs. The pain was at the top and bottom of my legs, it felt like I had knots in my shin. The back pain was also awful, even worse than the pain in my legs. It was all very unpleasant.

38. My wife had had enough. She made me go to the doctor to get checked out. In my experience, women tend to be much better about taking care of their bodies. Until she forced my hand, I always had an excuse not to go to the doctors.

39. I went to see my local doctor in Singapore, who was part of the Raffles Medical Group. There are different medical groups in Singapore and this is the particular medical group used by my company's insurance company.

40. I saw a doctor called Dr Singh. I explained my symptoms, and he said 'you need to get this sorted out. You are retiring soon and you aren't going to have much of a retirement at this rate'.

41. Dr Singh took blood tests and referred me to a Gastroenterologist called Dr Monga. This doctor was a specialist for Gastro for the Raffles Group at the time. He has now moved on to the Gleneagles group, which is another of the big medical practices in Singapore.

42. These things cost a lot of money in Singapore. There is no free healthcare provision, and each time you visit a doctor it costs money. For example, there is a charge of $100 to go to A&E.

43. Dr Monga explained the blood tests, told me I had tested positive for HCV antibodies but I would need an RNA test to confirm it This was in September 2017. **(See Exhibit WITN7082003)**

44. Initially I didn't know what HCV was. I knew about Hepatitis A, which is quite common and relatively easy to pick up in Asian culture due to the practice of sharing of food and utensils. I initially assumed HCV was something similar.

45. However Dr Monga explained more about it, and the type of treatment involved. I realised it was a serious condition. I felt very overwhelmed.

46. Dr Monga told me about Interferon and Ribavirin as a treatment. He mentioned that there was only a 30% chance of success and that the side effects could be debilitating. He then wrote me a prescription for the RNA test and genotype identification.

47. I was very muddled, frightened, and in shock. I didn't know what to do, so I put the test results and prescription in a drawer and buried it in the back of my mind.

48. In my mind I was equating HCV with HIV, and I knew having either of those infections in Singapore would make life very difficult.

49. I knew I only had 3 years to go to 2020 when I would be 65, and that's when I would be retiring and, in all likelihood, moving back to the UK. My wife and I had already discussed plans and we both wanted to move back to the UK to be closer to our daughters and granddaughter.

50. In the meantime, I knew I had to bury it. I made a decision to put up with the pain and discomfort until I was in a position to deal with it once I had retired.

I also told myself that medicine would improve and that if I could hang on treatment would get better.

51. For the next few years, I was praying no one would find out. Ultimately, I thought I would lose my job if my company were to find out, because they wouldn't be able to insure me. This was very stressful.

52. In respect of other risk factors, though I have lived abroad, and have travelled extensively for work to all sorts of places such as India, America and the Middle East I have never been treated for anything other than normal colds or minor viral infections, whilst abroad. Whilst resident in Singapore I did undergo an operation for a 'frozen shoulder" but this at no stage involved the use of any blood products.

53. I have never used intravenous drugs, I have never had relationships with sex workers, and I do not have any tattoos or piercings. There are therefore no other potential causes of my HCV infection.

Section 3. Other Infections

54. As well as HCV, I believe I was also infected with Hepatitis B (HBV) as a result of being transfused with contaminated blood.

55. In June 1999, I underwent a full health check at my local GP at Tanglin Medical Centre, Singapore. This included blood testing.

56. The test showed I had antibodies for both Hepatitis B and Hepatitis A. I was not tested for HCV at that time.

57. I confirm that I was not infected with HIV. I have been tested for HIV several times including the permanent residency entry to Singapore. GRO-C GRO-C

Section 4. Consent

58. Because of my age at the time of my operation, communication with the doctors and nurses was via my parents, who are now both deceased. I don't recall my mother or father ever mentioning having been given any information regarding the risks of blood transfusion from either the hospital or the GP.

59. I don't know what was communicated to my parents at the time of my transfusion, however I know my parents would never have questioned anything. If the doctors said I needed something, they definitely would have agreed with what they were being told.

60. My mother, born in 1916, and Father, born in 1920, were from a generation that would never question a doctor about anything he or she was going to do or doing and would have expected the same from me.

61. We trusted the Hospital Doctors and the GP completely. They were held in very high regard. The doctors had a duty of care to the patient. Times were very different then.

62. I consented to all of my later blood tests and the HCV test.

Section 5. Impact

63. I was affected by symptoms associated with HCV for a number of years. Even though I wasn't always aware it was HCV causing them, once I found out more about HCV and reflected on all of the symptoms I had been experiencing, that's undoubtedly what was at the root of them.

64. For a long time, I found it relatively easy to hide the symptoms and carry on. However the symptoms were very uncomfortable, and some have continued despite the fact I have had treatment for HCV.

65. I have experienced joint pains in my hands, cramps in my limbs, bruising easily, weight loss, tiredness, confusion and memory loss. All of these have affected my quality of life.

66. I have a skin condition called Ichthyosis which causes very dry skin. I have had it all my life, but this got much worse, which I believe was due to the HCV in my system. Even though I was living in a very warm climate with high humidity, my skin was getting so bad I was shedding dead skin everywhere, which was unpleasant.

67. Over the same period, I was always very tired, and I could fall asleep at the drop of a hat. But then when I went to bed, I couldn't sleep. This was very frustrating.

68. The symptoms have had an impact on my relationships, particularly with my wife.

69. For a number of years, the amount of time I spent getting up in the night to use the toilet or because of the cramps, was very disruptive for her and had had a detrimental effect on her work as a kindergarten teacher. This led to many arguments and me sleeping in the guest room a lot of the time to avoid disturbing her.

70. Knowing I might be HCV positive, having to hide it for a number of years, and then knowing I would need to explain the situation to my wife and family, has also been very stressful and has had an impact on me mentally.

71. Furthermore, as I mentioned, when I first found out about the HCV, I was living in Singapore. I knew having HCV in Singapore would make life very difficult. It is a very conservative society.

72. There is still a stigma about HCV and in many minds, it is still equated with HIV. I knew people knowing about it would be problematic. If my company found out I was HCV positive, it was going to be a big issue for me. I thought it would cost me my job, because as mentioned, they wouldn't be able to insure me.

73. I therefore had to bury it and hope that no one found out. I knew the doctor wouldn't be allowed to tell my employer, and my employer would not have had access to my medical record. But if something were to happen, I would have been responsible. This was a risk I took.

74. Fortunately, I was able to work until retirement age as planned, so I do not think there has been any financial impact. We did have a higher electric bill but that's all I can really think of. This was because of sleeping in separate rooms and the use of air conditioning to cool them. Even though I often felt the cold, there was still a need for the air conditioning for body comfort. Although I managed to continue working, it was very stressful having to keep it to myself and hoping no one would find out.

75. In terms of my personality, the virus has changed certain aspects. It made me very grumpy. I tried to rationalise it to myself, and asked myself whether it was the virus itself, or the fact that I was tired all the time that was making me feel that way. However, either way, the virus was ultimately responsible.

76. My ability to concentrate has undoubtedly diminished. For example, I can't concentrate on TV anymore. I can't even watch a whole hour of a television programme now.

77. Towards the end of work, I was starting to get confused about certain things, so it was actually a relief when I retired. I was running part of a multi-million-pound company with over 200 people working for me in my role as a manager. I couldn't afford to be confused or mess things up.

78. I used to have a memory like an elephant for people's names and faces, but not anymore. I find I forget things frequently. I am aware I am getting slower and at times a bit confused. I often get half way through something and then forget what I was talking about.

79. I have noticed these things have become more of an issue, and my wife finds it irritating as well.

80. The conversation we have had during this interview has actually been the best, most in-depth conversation I've had in a long time.

81. Physically, I still suffer with pain, the worst being my back pain, which has caused mobility issues as well as low mood. I also continue to have issues with joints, particularly in my hands and wrists. This has led to me having difficulty with certain tasks like writing, which I now find difficult.

82. In respect of family and friends, my HCV has not caused any issues or rifts, and it hasn't impacted my social life. I'm open about it and I have explained to my family and friends how I think I was infected.

83. My wife and I have lots of friends, and they all know. They ask about me because they know I've been going to hospital a lot so they ask about what's going on.

84. They are aware that this was done to me, I didn't bring it on myself. I never engaged in high risk behaviours. People have been very encouraging once I have explained my story.

85. I do not feel I have suffered with mental health issues as a result of my HCV infection, though I have experienced feelings of depression and frustration due to what the NHS has done to me with giving me infected blood and the long-term damage that they have caused to my liver. Recently, I have been told that I will have to have routine tests for the rest of my life. However, I have never sought help or medication for the problem.

86. As I mentioned, my wife and the rest of my family didn't know about the HCV until quite recently. I partitioned it in my own head and carried on as long as I could due to us living in Singapore where I felt it wouldn't be accepted, and in fact would have been highly detrimental for the reasons mentioned.

87. When she did find out, my wife didn't appear to be particularly concerned about herself. She felt that the chances of her having caught it were very small. GRO-C GRO-C.

88. GRO-C GRO-C – and it lifted a weight as I had feelings of guilt about keeping it from them.

89. By the time GRO-C I was already taking the medication. GRO-C.

90. I was very worried while GRO-C. However, I knew by then that the antiviral drugs were good, which felt like a lifeline, and made me less worried. GRO-C before I was on the medication, it would have been an even bigger burden.

91. The situation is all still very new to me. My official diagnosis was January this year, and its only May now. So it's hard to say what the impact is going to be in the future.

92. I will continue to follow the rules and have my checks. However, I do feel like they are rules, and not choices anymore. For example partying with a bottle of alcohol is not an option for me anymore.

93. I need to take out life insurance in order to take out a small mortgage to buy a slightly bigger flat here in the UK. I foresee the HCV being a big issue to

me in that respect. There is a question on the form about HIV, HCV and HBV, so I am going to have to disclose it, and I expect it will have an impact on my application. I believe that it is likely to lead to a significant increase in the premium which will be a major burden on my limited income from pensions. This makes me feel frustrated and angry with the NHS and the fact I was given infected blood. I know that this will hurt me financially for the rest of my life!

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

94. I always had relatively regular medical checks in Singapore. I was required to have a special medical just prior to my 62nd birthday. This was both a company and general Singapore Employment Law requirement.

95. Blood tests carried out for this medical showed my blood platelets were low. I later discovered this would have been down to the HCV, though we didn't realise at the time.

96. My low platelet count was a concern as they had been generally dropping since the blood test in 1999 and if it dropped any further, I would have been stopped from working. I wouldn't have been allowed to go onto site due to the higher risk of bleeding when-at site My platelets were monitored and they remained consistently low thereafter.

97. I found out I may have been HCV positive in 2017. Dr Monga carried out the HCV strip test and it showed I had the HCV antibodies and that I had been exposed to the Hepatitis C virus. I then had an ultrasound. It showed a fatty liver but no other abnormalities. I did not have a fibroscan at that time.

98. The doctor in Singapore discussed possible treatment with me. He mentioned Interferon and other antivirals. From what he explained, I knew the treatment would have severely impacted my life at the time financially and medically.

99. As already mentioned, there is no free healthcare in Singapore, and my insurance would not have covered it. Therefore the treatment for HCV would have cost me a lot of money and I was scared about being able to afford it.

100. As I've said, I therefore decided to wait until I retired before commencing treatment.

101. By the time I retired in February 2020, I was suffering a lot. As well as well as the pains, I was feeling constantly tired. I also felt very cold, even though I was living in a very warm climate.

102. My wife and I returned to the UK in June 2020. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, everything was delayed, including the move back to the UK. Once we got back, it also took me a long time to be able to get re-registered at my local GP surgery due to quarantine periods, lockdown restrictions on doctors surgeries and then backlogs.

103. I was finally able to register and make an appointment at Judges Close Doctors Surgery in August 2021. This was a telephone consultation. During this consultation, I explained that I believed I was infected with HCV and persuaded the GP to carry out some blood tests.

104. I was referred to East Surrey Hospital. There were further delays due to a mix-up with my referral, then a cancellation of the first appointment followed by a request from the hospital to go back to my GP and obtain another referral letter. I enlisted the support of the Mid Sussex Referral Service who wrote to the hospital asking them to escalate my case. My rationale to the Referral Service was that my blood tests showed I had a high viral load at the time. Therefore, I could end up becoming an even bigger burden on the system if I required extensive surgery, cancer treatment or a liver replacement due to delays by the hospital.

105. A second referral letter ended up having to be issued. I was starting to feel quite desperate by this point, especially with the ongoing Covid situation. I knew my immune system was compromised and I was beginning to lose hope.

106. These test results were initially released to me through the Patient Access App. While this did provide me with the information, no one called to talk me through the results, so I had no one to discuss them with. This was very worrying and frustrating.

107. The blood tests seemed to show I was indeed HCV positive, and indicated what appeared to be a very high viral load in excess of 20 million. It was stressful being given this information with no context and without being able to discuss it with a doctor, particularly what it could mean for the future.

108. At this point, I was yet to even see a medical professional face to face, apart from the phlebotomist who had taken my blood sample.

109. I was beginning to struggle with all the messing around. I didn't know where to turn, and I ended up going to the Hepatitis C Trust for support. They were incredibly helpful. I spoke to Sam May for a long while and discussed the figures I had been given. Her advice helped to give me hope and determination to carry on.

110. After speaking to Sam, on the 2nd of October, I called my GP's office and another doctor, Mishkat Sheheta called me back. I discussed with her the conversation I had with the trust and she told me she agreed that it might be Hep C and issued a follow up referral to East Surrey hospital

111. Eventually I had an appointment at the Gastroenterology Unit at East Surrey Hospital in November 2021. I saw Dr GRO-D, who is a registrar working under Dr Chakrabarty.

112. Dr GRO-D ordered a new series of tests including an RNA test as well as tests for HIV and some other infections.

113. It wasn't until I was able to finally speak to Dr GRO-D that it was confirmed to me by a doctor that the results meant I was HCV positive. This call took place in my car using the hands free speaker system, in January 2022. The call was unexpected. My wife was in the car at the time and until then was unaware of the infection. Although she took it well, it was not the best way for her to find out, and it was a shock for her.

114. Once my diagnosis had formally been communicated, I was referred to Karen Street, a hepatitis specialist nurse at East Surrey Hospital. She did some more tests, including a fibroscan.

115. She said this would be the beginning of a path for me, and she explained about the treatment and the next steps. She said I needed to be a candidate for the treatment. This meant my case had to go to a board who would decide whether I'm a good candidate for treatment or not. I found this prospect quite stressful and upsetting – it was a bit like a lottery.

116. There was a delay in my genome test coming back, so they couldn't tell me what type I was for a while. This was because of delays due to coronavirus testing at the lab. They had been inundated with samples waiting to be tested for Covid, so everything else was pushed back.

117. Decisions about my treatment couldn't be made until my genotype was confirmed, so this caused a further delay.

118. It eventually came back that I was type 1A. This is not the Asian version. To me, this dispelled any potential doubts about where I might have acquired the HCV infection, and confirmed that I had acquired it from my blood transfusion in the UK.

119. It was decided I was eligible for treatment, which was a relief. The treatment I was given was called Zapatier. It was a 12 week course, and was in tablet form.

120. When I was given the medicine, Karen told me to take good care of it. she mentioned that it cost a lot of money and to make sure that I didn't miss taking a tablet at any time. She also said that I might experience some side effects and if I did to call her mobile number.

121. Karen also gave lots of other advice in relation to precautions such as keeping my toothbrush separate, as well as diet and alcohol. I had already stopped any drinking by that point anyway. Even one glass of wine hurts me, and so it's not worth it.

122. After 8 weeks on the medication, I was given a blood test. My viral load had dropped to 43. This was very good news, I was elated.

123. I have now reached the end of the antiviral treatment and recently had a new series of blood tests after 12 weeks. I am currently waiting for the results, though I am very hopeful.

124. The Zapatier had hardly any side effects. It did cause me to wake up a lot in the night, and it also made me very thirsty, but I had no sickness or diarrhoea or anything like that. I know I was very lucky. I felt that the medicine was fantastic.

125. I have been told that I have lasting liver damage. I do not have cirrhosis but I have some thickening. I fall into the middle group. As a result, I am going to need to be monitored for the rest of my life. **(See Exhibit WITN7082004)**

126. I have also been having physiotherapy for my severe back pain which has unfortunately been ongoing. I have been given opioid painkillers to help to manage the pain. The pain has caused a loss of mobility and feelings of depression and frustration and has affected my quality of life.

127. My belief is that the source of the degenerative changes, which has now been diagnosed as being osteoarthritis, was my underlying HCV infection.

128. I have requested an appointment with my GP to discuss the long-term care as a result of the damage left by the virus.

129. Though there were several frustrating delays before I was seen at the hospital in the first instance, I have been happy with the support I have received from the liver team at East Surrey Hospital. I understand most of the problems were due to global issues as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and this couldn't really be helped.

130. Karen, in particular, has been brilliant. I can't say enough good words about her. It was Karen who encouraged GRO-C GRO-C. Knowing this was a real boost for me in my own treatment journey. Karen has been a huge help practically and mentally.

131. I always tell people I'm an HCV patient, and I have never been treated like a pariah as a result.

132. However I've been nervous about going to the dentist. I know I need some dental treatment, but I want it to be confirmed for sure I am no longer infectious before I go.

133. I feel it's unfair to expose people to it. I still feel a lot of guilt about potentially exposing it to my wife for all that time, and so I am conscious of limiting exposure to others.

134. No counselling or psychological support has ever been offered regarding my HCV diagnosis or treatment. However, I feel that I cope by doing activities such as going fishing, so I am not sure counselling would really be of benefit to me in any event.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

135. I had been in touch with the Hepatitis C Trust for emotional support and information about details such as HCV viral load, as I hadn't had that from my treating doctors or GP.

136. Sam May at the Hepatitis C Trust told me about the IBI and EIBSS. I sent her an email describing my symptoms and frustration at the lack of support and in her reply, she outlined details of the Inquiry and the support agency. Up until then I had been totally unaware of either. She also advised me on how I could obtain my medical records. I can't praise her enough. The IBI nor the issue of contaminated were high profile in the press or other media in Singapore.

137. I made an application to EIBSS in March 2022. It was a standard physical form that has to be signed by doctor. Dr Chakrabarty signed it and the hospital supported my application without any issues.

138. I also scanned and emailed them 7 PDF zip files with my supporting documents. I also wrote them a 4 page letter outlining the circumstances surrounding my infection with HCV.

139. 30 days after I sent everything through, they wrote to me asking for more documents.

140. I immediately called EIBSS and spoke to an assessor and asked if they had opened the documents I had already sent. I explained I had already had confirmation from a Miss Bainbrige that they had received them. The assessor stumbled and said no need to send more.

141. Unfortunately my application to EIBSS has since been rejected. I received this rejection yesterday. **(See Exhibit WITN7081005).**

142. They said on the 'balance of probabilities…' rhinoplasty (this is what in my naivety I originally referred to my procedure as) wouldn't have required a blood transfusion. That may be so in normal circumstances but my operation went wrong somewhere so how do they know?

143. They also said because of my work as a 'policeman in Singapore', there was a risk of needlestick injury! I found this incredulous. To be clear, I have never been a policeman in the UK, Singapore or anywhere else. I would have to be a citizen in Singapore to be a policeman, which I'm not, so that is completely impossible.

144. In the supporting documents I supplied to EIBSS, I had included a medical check by the Singapore police for my driving licence. This is a standard legal requirement in order to renew your driving licence. **(See Exhibit WITN7082006)**

145. They got the facts completely wrong. I don't think they even opened the documents I had sent, and I am sure they didn't look at my application properly.

146. I have an open mind about it. I understand it's very difficult to prove when my records have been destroyed, but similarly they can't prove that it didn't happen.

147. As a result of my rejected application, I've had no financial support to date. However I certainly intend to appeal the EIBSS decision.

148. I recently tried to obtain my medical records in order to support my application, but I got short shrift from the Bristol NHS Trust, and was told they had been destroyed. I received written confirmation from the Trust and submitted their reply to EIBSS as part of my application.

149. I spent a long time working on multimillion pound contracts with contract lawyers. One of the pointers I picked up was not to leave evidence

behind. I know it's possibly corporate cynicism, but it doesn't help when you are trying to get information on yourself and it's all been destroyed.

Section 8. Other Issues

150. I have only recently realised just how many people this has happened to. This was a shock, and it's also a shock that I didn't know anything about it until so recently.

151. I can't understand why there wasn't much in the way of disclosure by the NHS to people who might have been infected.

152. In view of my career taking me overseas for a significant period I can appreciate why it might have been difficult for the NHS to keep up with my movements, but many people who have been infected have lived in the same place all their lives.

153. When I contacted the North Bristol Trust for my records, I was told that they don't keep records after 8 years. This makes no sense, particularly given the fact that we are talking about a virus that in many cases takes such a long time to appear.

154. My motivation for taking part in the Inquiry is not about looking for retribution. Of course, I am not happy about it and I am very upset about what the infected blood and the virus has done to my liver and the consequent long term financial implications for myself and my wife, but it happened.

155. I do care about how many other people like me there are out there. I have decided I want to help with the Hepatitis C Trust.

156. There will be other people out there who will be suffering that have had it for years, that I can help to identify and provide assistance to, like they did for me.

157. Unless there is more HCV testing, the problem could continue. It's sad to think of other people out there that are suffering and don't know why.

158. I'm sure many people have died as a result of liver cancer or other issues which have come about as a result of HCV. However there doesn't seem to be a push to test for it, which I find very surprising. I think it should be part of routine blood testing.

159. I have never seen any signs about it at GP for example. There are no posters to raise awareness like there are for other conditions.

160. It still seems to be something that has to be specifically asked for, as a result of symptoms. And even then, sometimes you have to convince the GP or doctor to actually carry out the test.

161. For example, GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C what about others with less knowledge or character?

162. I am glad to be working towards volunteering to support the Hepatitis C Trust. I feel like they did a lot more for me than my own GP, and I am keen to give back.

163. They helped me to be able to explain the situation to my wife. It's been a fantastic support mechanism, a real tremendous help.

164. A final issue I wanted to raise was that of organ donation, as its now an 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in'.

NOT RELEVANT

GRO-C

165. I can't imagine anyone would want my liver, but I don't know whether I should be reporting anything to the DVLA in respect of opting out of organ donation, or whether this situation has been fully considered.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 6th July 2022