

Witness Name: Mrs. B Hansford

Statement No: WITN1661001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: April 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRIDGET HANSFORD

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I, Bridget Hansford will say as follows:-

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

1. My name is Bridget Hansford. I was born on GRO-C 1956 and live at GRO-C with my partner.
2. I make this statement as the widow of Clifford Maurice Hansford who was born on the GRO-C 1949 and was infected with HIV as a result of receiving contaminated blood products and who died on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1991.
3. **This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late husband's medical records.**

#### **Section 2. How Affected**

4. My late husband Clifford was diagnosed with Haemophilia A as a child. I believe it was classed as severe.

5. Clifford received Factor VIII blood products to treat his Haemophilia. I am not sure when he first started using Factor VIII. When I met him in 1981 he was already using it as treatment.
6. Clifford was treated at St James University Hospital ("SUH") in Leeds. His consultant was Dr. McVerrey.
7. I understand that the treatment was easy to use and effective. Clifford was never advised beforehand that there were any risk of being exposed to infection from blood products. If he had he would never have used the blood products.
8. In or about 1984 Clifford had a routine check up at SUH. Shortly after this he was called in for a follow up meeting. Clifford was not told what the second meeting would be about. At this follow-up meeting Clifford was told he was HIV positive as a result of receiving contaminated blood products. He was told he had HIV anti-bodies in his blood and that he would therefore be fine. His consultant gave him the impression that HIV was not life-threatening.
9. The information that my late husband received was far from adequate. After the appointment he had a cheery attitude, he had no idea this infection could possibly kill him. He was under the impression he would be fine due to the antibodies. It fell to me to explain that HIV was life threatening. I discovered he had been given no information to help him understand and manage the infection or the risks of others being infected.
10. Even though we were a newly wed couple I was never invited to be tested for HIV or to have the possible risks explained to me. More information should have been given to both of us and they should have made Clifford aware of the seriousness of HIV. I had to seek advice and testing independently from my own GP.
11. After being diagnosed no treatment was offered to Clifford. We sought advice from other consultants who told us Azidothymidine AZT could possibly work

as a treatment. However we were refused this treatment until much later. By the time Clifford was treated with AZT he was already very ill.

12. Clifford passed away on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1991 at the age of 41. His death was a result of his infection.

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

13. I do not believe that Clifford had any other infections, other than HIV.

### **Section 4. Consent**

14. I believe that my late husband was tested and treated without his knowledge. He went to the hospital for a routine appointment. He was not told he was being tested for anything but they tested for HIV.

15. I am not aware if Clifford was tested for the purposes of research but taking everything into account, I believe it is very possible. After being diagnosed with HIV he received a lot more Factor VIII to take prophylactically. It is possible this increase in treatment was for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

16. Clifford suffered many physical effects as a result of being infected with HIV. He developed lung infections, Pneumonia and Lymphoma. These affected his quality of life. He had been a very strong and healthy man prior to being infected.

17. He also developed serious skin conditions such as warts and lesions that required Liquid Nitrogen Treatment.

18. Mentally, he became very depressed. It was at a time when HIV was not spoken about so he tried to just carry on and pretend to be normal. However

he had no energy and was losing the ability to walk due to complications from the HIV infection. Before this he was a very fit man, he was a member of Audax UK and completed many endurance rides. He ended up being confined to a wheel chair and becoming a recluse. His circle of friends shrunk. He stopped going out and believed he couldn't talk to anyone about it.

19. As the infection progressed, Clifford started to gradually deteriorate. He was a very intelligent man, an academic who worked at a university. However his intellect began to fail him. As his illness progressed Clifford started to say things that were very odd because he couldn't function properly.
20. When Clifford started to develop lesions he began to receive anonymous letters from people accusing him of having AIDS and being a homosexual. People on the outside must have been able to recognise what was happening regarding his illness. Letters like this are horrible to receive and increase the belief that you have to keep things like this to yourselves in order to protect yourself and your family.
21. When Clifford started AZT he suffered seriously bad side effects of diarrhoea, nausea and depression.
22. In 1989 Clifford was in the USA for work. While there he required treatment for a pneumonia. While receiving the treatment one of the doctors asked him '*how long have you had AIDS*'. This came as a shock as Clifford had not been told that his HIV had developed into AIDS at this point, and we hadn't been prepared for the news. I think the doctor who told him assumed he had been told by one of his doctors. This is when it really hit home for us and we realised how ill he was, the news was devastating. It also shows that he wasn't being kept up to date or provided with adequate information throughout this time.
23. At home it was very hard. We were newly weds and physical contact was difficult as we didn't know the ways in which his HIV could be transmitted. This put a huge strain on our relationship, the diagnosis destroyed our sex

life. We wanted to have children but as we weren't given any help or advice about sexual activity we decided it wasn't worth the risk.

24. We hid Clifford's illness to the best of our ability, this made us more isolated. Other diseases can be spoken about but the common reaction to HIV was different, you didn't receive any support. If people found out that you had HIV they wouldn't even shake your hand, they didn't want to be near you. For this reason it just became something we didn't discuss.

25. Clifford told his family of his infection and, his mother couldn't deal with it. She did not attend his funeral. His father was not around but he did turn up to the hospital shortly before Clifford passed away. Cliff found it very difficult to see his father as he hadn't seen him for many years and he realised he must be dying and was devastated. My parents and family were very supportive which helped.

26. Clifford had to take a lot of time off work and in the end, had to stop working. I feel his work was what kept him going. Realistically he should have stopped working earlier but he was very determined, and his employers didn't question his illness. He worked until he was no longer physically able; this was 6 weeks before he passed away. He was in so much pain.

27. In 1990 I gave up work in order to support and care for Clifford to the best of my ability. This made life a lot harder but I needed to be there to care for him. The infection led to us both being affected; it also led to a loss of earnings. I previously worked as an architect in York, I lost my salary and there was a huge effect on my professional life. My life hasn't been what I wanted or expected due to Clifford being infected with HIV.

## **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

28. Clifford was not given the AZT treatment until he had been ill/infected for a long while and at this point his HIV had progressed. His consultant Dr. McVeray was a very arrogant man and we were unhappy with the treatment

Clifford was receiving so spoke to our GP who referred us to a consultant in Hull who wanted Clifford to start the AZT treatment immediately. The consultant contacted SUH to obtain approval. This was refused by SUH and we were told Clifford was not allowed to be a patient of the consultant in Hull. As a result of this refusal, the AZT treatment wasn't started until much later than it should have been.

29. There was a time when Clifford needed a biopsy on a lymphoma that was developing but this was refused as the surgeon said he didn't want his theatre contaminated. After this we began to lose trust in the medical team and the social worker who had been appointed to us.

30. Neither of us was ever offered any counselling or psychological support to help us deal with the news of the infection and how it might affect us.

31. I was never offered any bereavement therapy after my Clifford passed away.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

32. Clifford applied for financial assistance and I received a pay-out from the MacFarlane Trust; ("MFT") I believe it was about £23,000.

33. We heard about the financial assistance through the Haemophilia Society. We wouldn't have heard about it otherwise as help and advice was always hard to come by. I believe Clifford had to sign a waiver in order to receive the money from the MFT, which in retrospect is appalling.

34. Clifford received no monthly payments of any kind. He didn't receive any other support from any trust or fund.

35. I don't believe there were any difficulties in applying for financial assistance. The payment was made after Clifford's death; the money wasn't there before he died.

36. I have not applied for, nor received, financial relief.

37. The amount paid was laughable. You can not put a price on a person's life.

The amount paid did not go anywhere near compensating for the damage that had been done. I recently bumped into someone at a traffic light. There was no visible damage to either car but apparently the other driver suffered from whiplash and they received £10,000. It is shocking that we were given the amount we were even though my husband was infected through no fault of his own and was made to suffer until he died. It is a scandal. The Government knew they were catching us at a difficult time in our lives and paid us a miserable sum and made us sign a waiver. They had no capacity to be sensible or thoughtful to our needs.

## **8. Other Issues**

38. It has taken 28 years for all of this to come to light since Clifford's death. I believe the Government are trying to wait for our memories to deteriorate. It is shocking and an insult to any family that has had to deal with this. They took away people's futures.

39. People must be held accountable, why has it not been looked at properly? If it was a genuine mistake surely it wouldn't have taken this long. Everything has been hidden and covered up.

40. It shows things only get dealt with if they are seen as 'high profile'. For the people who have had to live with this there is a lasting impact. Clifford died 28 years ago but it is still quite raw for me. It brings back painful memories but it is important to go ahead with this.

## **Anonymity**

41. I do not wish to be anonymous and want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

1 May 2019