

Witness Name: Adolfine Jackson

Statement No.: WITN2173001

Exhibits: none

Dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ADOLFINE JACKSON**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

I, Adolfine Jackson, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Adolfine Jackson. My maiden name is Gruber. My date of birth is GRO-C 1939 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I married my husband John Jackson in 1999. I previously worked as a financial controller and was in this role for around twenty years. I intend to speak about my experience of becoming infected with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

2. I do not wish to be anonymous for this statement.

#### **Section 2. How Infected**

3. I was infected with hepatitis C in April 1967 after receiving a blood transfusion for a hysterectomy I underwent at the Law Hospital, South Lanarkshire. Dr Price was in charge of my care during that operation. As far as I can remember, my condition reached such a bad state during the operation that I required a blood transfusion. I also received plasma before and after the operation. I was then treated for a blood clot that had developed because of the hysterectomy, around a week after my initial operation. I cannot remember if I received another blood transfusion for that treatment. After that spell in hospital I was very unwell, I had to stay in hospital for around two weeks after the operation until I fully recovered. After I returned home, I developed nine abscesses on the wound from my hysterectomy, essentially one on each stitch. These abscesses had to be lanced by my GP until they had fully healed. I cannot remember the name of my GP at that time. The toll of the treatment for my hysterectomy and my abscesses left me deeply depressed.
4. I was not given any information about the risks of contracting an infection from a blood transfusion before my operation, they didn't tell me a thing.
5. I was diagnosed with hepatitis C in 2003, I could not say exactly what date I was diagnosed. Immediately following my hysterectomy, up until my diagnosis in 2003, I would regularly feel lethargic, tired and nauseous. I had no idea what was causing these symptoms, I just put up with them for years. I remember I would struggle doing simple things like brushing my teeth without feeling exhausted and that I was going to be sick. Eventually it got to the point where I had to know what was wrong with me and I was referred to the Wishaw General Hospital to see what the problem was. I saw Dr GRO-D at Wishaw General and he performed some blood tests on me. That test confirmed that I had contracted hepatitis C.
6. Dr GRO-D didn't tell me anything about the infection at that appointment. He asked a lot of questions about whether I was a heavy drinker, whether I was a drug user and if I had been sleeping with a lot of people, but nothing about the infection.

7. I don't think the information I was given that day was adequate to help me understand or manage my infection. All he did was ask me questions and tell me that the infection was why I had been feeling as ill as I had been, for all those years.
8. I don't think the information about my infection could have been given to me earlier.
9. I did not like the way I was told about my infection. I was hit with all these accusative questions and nothing was really explained to me. I thought it was very insensitive. I wasn't too upset about it but I knew I was unwell and I should not have been spoke to like that.
10. I did not receive any information about cross infection risks at that appointment.
11. I did not like the way I had been spoken to by Dr **GRO-D** at my diagnosis so I asked to be transferred to another doctor. I didn't want to be treated by him again. I was then referred to Monklands Hospital sometime in 2003 to see a Dr Kennedy. He performed some further tests and he told me that I had genotype B hepatitis C. He told me that there was a treatment available for hepatitis C but that it would be extremely challenging psychologically to go through, so he referred me to a psychologist for an evaluation before I could receive any treatment. I passed that evaluation and received the treatment in 2005.

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

12. I have not contracted any other infections as a result of my blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

13. I do not believe I have ever been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent.

14. I do not believe I have ever been treated or tested for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact**

15. Mentally I wouldn't say the infection had a big impact on me, I wouldn't let it. When I was told about my infection, I accepted it and tried to get on with things as normal. Of course I was upset about my diagnosis, but not to the extent that it had any effect on me mentally.
16. The infection, pretty much right after my hysterectomy in 1967, would make me feel nauseous and lethargic. I was exhausted all the time from doing everyday tasks and almost everything made me feel like I was going to be sick. I have also had problems with my memory as well, over the years I feel like my memory has deteriorated very quickly, I used to have a very good memory before my infection. I couldn't say exactly when I started to notice this effect on my memory but I can say that it was after my operation.
17. I now suffer from osteoporosis that has led to breaking me many bones over the years. I was diagnosed with this in 2010 when I broke my hip. I could not say for sure whether this was caused by my hepatitis C or the treatment I received for it.
18. I received treatment for my hepatitis C in 2005 through Monklands Hospital. It was Dr Kennedy in charge of my care at the time. The treatment was a combination of Interferon and Ribavirin and lasted for forty eight weeks. I think the treatment was only meant to last for around three months but it was affecting my blood count quite badly so I had to stop and start the treatment around three times over that year, so that my platelet count could be given a chance to stabilise. After the course of treatment had been completed, I was tested and given the all clear from the infection.
19. Before I was able to start this treatment in 2005, Dr Kennedy had me complete a psychological evaluation at the Monklands Hospital to see whether I could

stand up to the treatment psychologically. He had told me that this treatment was going to be very tough mentally and talked me through some of the side effects beforehand. I could not say who I had that evaluation with but it was one of the counsellors at the Monklands Hospital. I passed that evaluation and was able to receive treatment shortly after that. That was the only obstacle I faced in receiving treatment.

20. I don't think there were any other treatments I could have received.
21. The treatment was very hard to cope with mentally. I felt like I lost a year of my life, I have no idea where that time went. It felt like all I did, was go back and forth to the hospital for treatment, that was my entire life was for the year, and that was very hard on me. I was very tired all the time I couldn't do very much and that got me down from time to time.
22. Physically, the treatment didn't bring on any new symptoms, I was just dealing with the fatigue and nausea throughout the course of treatment mainly. I felt like my memory problems got a little worse during the treatment as well, like there was a fog over me at times. It would take me a lot longer to focus on things.
23. I wouldn't say that my infection had any effect on my treatment for anything else.
24. My family were all very scared about my infection when they found out so it had a big impact on them that way. I also told my family not to talk about my infection outside the house, to avoid the stigma. Mentally it was a terrible thing for us all to deal with.
25. My first husband actually contracted hepatitis C as well, he caught it from me whilst we were together. I had no idea I had hepatitis C all those years we were together and I didn't know anything about cross infection back then. He started to feel quite unwell, similar to how I had felt before my diagnosis, sometime after 2003. He was tested for hepatitis C after my children and I were tested in 2003. I believe he was tested by Dr GRO-D at Wishaw General.

As far as I can remember, his infection wasn't considered severe enough for him to require treatment. He actually didn't receive any treatment as far as I am aware. He died two years ago of a brain haemorrhage and as far as I know he died with hepatitis C still active.

26. I was so worried about infecting people from things like drinking from the same glass, that the infection did have quite an impact on my social life. It's not that I had a huge social life either but there was the fear of infecting others that made me not want to see people as much. Although, it would be worth saying that there was a very short time between my diagnosis and my treatment so I didn't have to deal with it for very long.
27. I always told my family not to talk about the infection outside of the home, so not a lot of people knew about it. I think that helped us avoid a lot of the stigma associated with a hepatitis C diagnosis.
28. I worked during my infection but I honestly can't really remember much about that time. I know I went to work and came home but I struggle to remember that far back. I don't remember having to take any time off or anything like that, as far as I can remember, the infection didn't really impact my employment.
29. I wouldn't say there was any financial effect from my infection either.
30. My two children, Douglas and Susan, were very scared when they first found out about my infection. They were very worried that I might die. I know that must have been hard on them. They did settle into it eventually and found ways of coping. We also always made sure they used different towels, different toothbrushes and things like that. That helped them a lot I think.

#### **Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support**

31. I have never faced any difficulties in accessing treatment, care or support because of my infection.

32. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support because of my infection but I don't think that is something I would have wanted to do anyway.

#### Section 7 . Financial Assistance

33. I received £20,000 from the Skipton Fund in 2004. I received a further £30,000 from the fund in either 2005 or 2006. I can't remember exactly how I found out about the fund but I think it must have been someone at the hospital that told me. To apply to the fund, I had to fill out a form and there was another form for my doctor to fill out as well, it was pretty straightforward. I didn't have any difficulties in applying to the fund.
34. I also receive £1,600 a month from SIBSS and those payments started around two years ago. I found out about SIBSS after they had written to me, telling me about the fund. I think they must have had my information from the Skipton Fund. To apply, I had to fill out a self-assessment form. It was basically a lot of questions about how the infection had affected me. The forms were pretty easy to fill out. I didn't have difficulties applying to SIBSS either.

#### Section 8. Other Issues

35. I have nothing else to bring to the Inquiry's attention

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

1. 8. 20