

Witness Name: James O'Hare

Statement No.: WITN2236001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 12th August 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES O'HARE

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

I, James O'Hare, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is James O'Hare. My date of birth is GRO-C 1969 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am married to my wife Karlyn O'Hare and we have been married for twenty one years. We have two children together, Kieran who is twenty four and Kaitlyn who is eighteen. I currently work as a storeman driver and I have been doing that for the last three years. I intend to speak about my mother Kathleen Rose O'Hare who was born on the GRO-C 1939 and passed away on 31st August 2000. I will speak in particular about the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment she received and the impact it had on her and our lives together as a family.
2. I do not wish to be anonymous for this statement.

Section 2. How Infected

3. My Mum was a very strong woman, she was very good at getting me and my siblings to do what she wanted us to do. She made sure we were always on the right path, getting us to school on time when we were young and making sure we all went on to get jobs. She made sure we were all doing what we needed to be doing in life and brought us up properly. My Mum was just a nice homely person who loved her family. She was a stay at home Mum most of her life but she used to work as a cleaner from time to time to earn some extra money and liked to volunteer in charity shops when she could. I was the youngest of my siblings so I always had a good relationship with my Mum, she definitely spoiled me. I got away with a lot of things my older brothers and sisters wouldn't. We always had a good friendship and we would always stay in touch with each other, she was someone I connected with really well.
4. I was only thirteen when my Mum became infected with hepatitis C so there are a lot of things I don't remember about what happened. I think my Mum and siblings shielded me from what was going on a lot of the time. But to my knowledge, my Mum was admitted to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary around 1983 for an operation. I think it was her bladder that had been operated on but I cannot be sure. I could not say who was in charge of her care at that time. During that operation she received a blood transfusion that caused her to contract hepatitis C. I can't remember a lot about what happened during that time but I remember being taken to see my Mum in the hospital around the time of her operation and seeing that she was in a very bad way. I think I was brought in that day so I could say goodbye essentially. Luckily somehow she pulled through but I always remembered that day. If my Mum had not had that blood transfusion, she would have died. Her contracting the infection was terrible but it gave me another seventeen years with my Mum.
5. I do not know whether any information was provided to my Mum about the risk of infection from the blood transfusion before she received it.
6. I do not know when my Mum was diagnosed with hepatitis C and I could not speak to what she was told at the diagnosis. I was so young at the time that I

think would have been protected from hearing any of that information by my family.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I could not say whether my Mum contracted any other infections other than hepatitis C as a result of the blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

8. I do not know whether my Mum was ever treated or tested without her knowledge or consent.
9. I also would not be able to say whether my Mum was ever treated or tested without being given full or adequate information.
10. I do not know if my Mum was ever treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

11. It was only really in the later part of my Mum's life, before she passed away, that I noticed the mental effect of her infection. My Mum was the type of person that would just get up every day and get on with things and I know that she would have kept a lot of what she felt hidden away. I could tell towards the end she was dealing with a lot behind the scenes. I do remember a few months before she passed away she was bedridden, her health was really deteriorating but she always managed to put on a smile if I came to visit. That's just the type of person she was.
12. Physically I think the infection caused a lot of mobility issues for my Mum, she could get very tired and have pains in her joints some of the time. She also

had some skin issues from what I can remember. I don't know exactly what she had but she was very jaundiced as her infection went on. She would also become quite bloated from time to time. Towards the end of her life, it was the combination of all these issues that led to her being bedridden.

13. I do not know if my Mum's infection led to any further medical complications or conditions.
14. I wouldn't be able to say too much about what the infection was like for her in first few years of it, but I know as time went on, she started not being able to do the things she normally would in life. She couldn't get about as easily or watch her grandchildren, I know that must have been hard for her. I think the infection just took away a lot of the things she enjoyed in her life as time went on.
15. I do not know whether my Mum ever received treatment for her hepatitis C. It's possible that she could have at one stage but I couldn't say for sure.
16. I don't think my Mum's infected status affected her treatment for anything medical or dental but I am not sure about that.
17. I was out of the family home and had started my own family when my Mum was dealing with the effects of the infection so I wouldn't really be able to say what effect it had on her private life. All I can say is that whenever I would see her it would be at home so I know she wasn't really getting out much. She wasn't able to go out and visit anybody so she would have relied on people visiting her. I wouldn't say the infection affected the family life at home too much either, we were all there for her if she needed, there weren't a lot of issues caused by it. The only issue that mattered was when she left us.
18. My Mum not being there had a huge impact on me. I was always aware that she wasn't there anymore. [I was constantly made aware of how she wasn't there anymore] It was something I thought about a lot. When I found out that my Mum had passed away earlier than she should have because of the hepatitis C infection it was very upsetting. My daughter Kaitlyn was born the

year after she died, and I really wish she could have had the chance to meet her. I always think about her transfusion, I know it gave her the infection but if she hadn't received it I wouldn't have had the seventeen years I had with her after it. My siblings always tell me that if she had received clean blood then she might still be here and she could still be part of our lives, it's a hard thing to think about.

19. I wouldn't be able to say if my Mum or the family faced any issues from the stigma associated with hepatitis C. I was not aware of any of those issues having happened but they could have.
20. I am not too sure how my Mum's infection would have affected the rest of the family but all I can say it would have probably been the same as it was for me. Just the knowledge that we lost out on a lot of the time and experiences we could have had with her if she hadn't received the blood from that transfusion. It's not something that we have ever really talked about together.
21. After her operation in 1983, my Mum stopped working. She would only work part-time as a cleaner to bring in some extra money before her operation, so I don't think stopping that would have had too much of a financial effect on her.

Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support

22. I do not know whether my Mum faced any obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support because of her infection.
23. I don't know if counselling or psychological support was ever offered to my Mum because of what happened. I think my Mum would have benefitted from something like that if it had been offered. Anyone in that situation needs all the help they can get.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

24. I do not know if my Mum received any financial assistance from any of the funds set up to distribute payments. She could have, but I don't think that's something she really would have spoken to me about.
25. I have not received any financial assistance myself, due to my Mum's infection.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. 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

17/08/2020