

Witness Name: Fiona Parkes

Statement No.: WITN3102001

Exhibits: NIL

Dated: 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FIONA PARKES

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 23 April 2019.

I, Fiona Parkes, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Fiona Parkes. My date of birth is GRO-C 1968 and my address is known to the Inquiry. My father is Robert (Robin) Worsley, and he has also given a statement to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about my recollections of how my father's infection with hepatitis C (HCV) impacted our family's life. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected us, the treatment received and the impact it had on us.

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

2. I don't recall exactly how old I was when I learnt about my father's infection. At the time my father told me he was infected, he stated that it was as a result of a blood transfusion of "dirty blood". When I was younger, around ten years old, I had been involved in a farm accident with my father GRO-C

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When I found out he had HCV, I assumed that this was the transfusion that had infected him. It took me many years to get over this accident due to the harm that the cut caused and additionally, because I believed that the blood my father received had given him a disease. It is only during this Inquiry that I have learnt that it was through a different blood transfusion that he was infected with HCV; my father told me earlier this year when he was preparing for this process.

3. I was living with my dad at the time he received the information that he had a disease. I recall in great detail when he told us that he was infected with what he called dirty blood, and that we could catch a virus if we came in contact with his blood. I distinctly remember looking at the towels in the bathroom that he used for shaving that had blood spots on them. I would also look at his toothbrush. I wondered whether if I kissed him and he had a cut I would catch it, or if my toothbrush touched his I would catch it. At that time, I was not sure what "it" was. I don't believe that he was given adequate information about transmission of the disease.
4. I have been tested for HCV and at the time I was tested I was not infected.
5. As previously stated, I was not told exactly when he was infected with HCV as a result of infected blood. This caused me a double dose of huge guilt for decades, 

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6. In addition, I would say that he was mentally affected by his infection. I have a very clear image of him trying to explain it to me. He didn't have the words to describe what the infection was.

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

7. It is not my belief that my father received any other disease.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

8. I believe my father fully consented to treatment and testing.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

9. My father is a stoic, very community-minded man and extraordinarily hard working. He tends to bottle things up, rather than talk about them, so having the news about his infection would have undoubtedly added to his stress. He was a farmer for most of his working life, and, like many farmers, was under stress. When Dad is stressed he verbally lashes out. It is difficult to really say what effect his infection had upon him or upon the family, but I recall him referring to his infection as a "time bomb" and I'm sure it certainly caused him to get angry more easily. I think when we are under stress we all tend to lash out. For Dad, like many men and especially his generation, talking things out does not come easily, if at all.
10. I started working with Schering-Plough around this time. Schering-Plough is a pharmaceutical manufacturing company, and one product they provide is a hepatitis C treatment. I was a hospital representative for ViraferonPeg and Ribavirin, which treat HCV. As a result, I became very well informed about HCV. I pushed my father to go to the GP but he had little luck. Information about HCV was not readily available especially at General Practitioner level. I am unaware if my father was experiencing symptoms directly related to HCV, but he was always very tired. It is very hard to explain how such a serious disease may not make you feel unwell. As he was not feeling sick, it felt wrong. I was also aware that if he was "lucky" enough to get treatment it might have made him feel very unwell and he may also not be cleared, but I persisted.
11. He has always had the best of care from his GP surgery and I am not calling them into fault. However, HCV was a new and "dirty" disease with little information. As a medical sales representative, a large part of my role was education. I educated my father to the best of my knowledge and explained that neither his GP nor Yeovil District General Hospital would give him the care that he needed. I had visited hepatology units, prisons and drug treatment centres over the entire South West, South and Mid Wales, and others including Gloucester, Birmingham, John Radcliffe and Southampton professionally.

From these visits, I knew that the care of a specialist nurse was critical in the well-being of an infected patient.

12. At that time Bristol was down at least one hepatologist, so I pushed my father to get a referral to Exeter. I was confident that at Exeter, with Dr John Christie (Dr Christie) and his nurse, Fiona Fry (Ms Fry), he would be in the right hands. If I recall correctly, at that time ViraferonPeg was only being used for around 50 patients in the South West and funding was a very big issue. Once my father was with Exeter I relaxed as I knew he would have the very best of care with Dr Christie and Ms Fry, and my father was treated with ViraferonPeg. At that time the research into the different HCV genotypes was coming out and if I recall correctly, he did have one of the less damaging genotypes, but I could be wrong.
13. I believe that my father had 6 months of treatment with ViraferonPeg and Ribavirin. He had to administer the injections at home. I believe that the treatment cleared the virus. Once my father accessed the treatment he had the best of care. It is hard to say what the mental effects of the treatment were on my father. He didn't have the often life changing side effects, but he was very tired and often depressed. It is hard to attribute that to the treatment due to nature of my father. I believe that the "dirty" image of HCV will have impacted him in terms of treatment and medical or dental care for other conditions.
14. Dad has always felt that this issue had been swept under the carpet so to speak. Luckily, I was able to educate and encourage him. He is also articulate and able to stand up for himself, others less so. I think I know my Dad reasonably well and now, at over 80, he wishes to make his situation known to help those that have not been so lucky to either access treatment, or even get tested in time. It is also to help the hundreds of others that have had to suffer from a lack of information, the stigma of "dirty" blood, late treatment and often nasty side-effects for decades.

**Section 6. Financial Assistance**

15. I am not aware of the details of any financial assistance my father may have received.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 19/7/2019