Witness Name: Violet Bambrick
Statement No.: WITN3304001
Exhibits: **WITN3304002 - 008**
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF VIOLET BAMBRICK

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 14 October 2019.

I, Violet Bambrick, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Violet Bambrick, known as 'Vi'. My date of birth is GRO-C 1940. I live in Hertfordshire and my full address is known to the Inquiry. I am a widow with 5 sons.

2. I intend to speak about my late husband, Patrick Oliver Bambrick, hereafter known as 'Pat'. He was born on GRO-C 1937 and we married in 1959. Pat was infected with Hepatitis C through the use of blood products and he passed away on 10 May 2003. In particular, I will speak about the nature of Pat's illness, how the illness affected him and my family, the treatment he received and the impact it had on his life and our lives together.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with drafting my statement.

4. The process of anonymity has been explained to me and I have decided not to remain anonymous.

Section 2. How Affected

5. Pat initially had mild haemophilia A. His Factor VIII treatment was administered in 1970 at Lister Hospital when he had minor injuries, an operation or a procedure such as a tooth extraction. Before being given Factor VIII he was never, at any time, told that there might be a risk of infection.

6. Pat had an annual blood check up due to his haemophilia. On returning from an annual check-up in October 2001, I noticed a small round blue sticker on his appointment card **(Exhibit WITN3304002)** which I had not noticed previously. I asked Pat what it signified and he was mystified and said he had no idea.

7. I contacted the Lister Hospital the next day, and I was able to speak to the Consultant, Dr GRO-D who informed me that Pat suffered with Hepatitis C, and had done so for 5 years and, in fact had known about the diagnosis. This was untrue because I am not sure that we had ever heard of the condition. Pat said he was certain that his own doctor would also have informed him. At no time was Pat offered advice, guidance or medication by Dr GRO-D

8. Pat and I then made an appointment at the Chells Surgery to see our GP, Dr Osindero, who confirmed that he had the condition and had it for 6 years. We were then told that it was infectious and on hearing this I immediately asked for a test which thankfully, proved negative. I do not recall us being given advice by Dr Osindero with regard to drugs, leaflets or any guidance to any organisation who we might be able to contact. If we had we would certainly have taken it up.

9. After some time Pat discovered the Haemophilia Society and spoke to a contact who began to send regular updates with regard to the mishandling by the

Government of the 'tainted blood' situation and guidance on Hepatitis C. It was then that we realized what a serious situation he was in.

10. However, after searching through Pat's documents during this statement process, I have discovered a letter dated 24 May 2002 from Pat to Dr GRO-D in which he states that Dr Osindero explained Hepatitis C to him and what problems could occur (**Exhibit WITN3304003**).

Section 3. Other Infections

11. Pat was infected with Hepatitis C only.

Section 4. Consent

12. I am certain Pat was tested without his knowledge and consent. If he had known, I am positive he would not have kept it from me.

13. A few months before Pat died he consented to a liver biopsy but passed away before it could be carried out.

14. I consented to a Hepatitis C test immediately after we discovered Pat had been diagnosed, and it came back negative.

15. Pat was very upset after having received a letter dated 3 April 1987 from the Royal Free Hospital informing him he had been tested for AIDS of which he had again no knowledge (**Exhibit WITN3304004**). I am not sure if it was illegal at the time and needed a patient's permission. I do know that at some time before that he received a postcard through the post confirming he did not have AIDS and was horrified due to being unaware a test had been carried out. (At that time it was illegal.)

Section 5. Impact

16. In terms of the mental and physical effects, there were none that I noticed. Whether Pat put it to the back of his mind or kept a lot to himself, I do not know.

17. When we found out about Hepatitis C, I do recall asking Pat what it was and he said that he did not know and it did not occur to us how bad it was. It was only after we were in contact with the Haemophilia Society that we then started realizing how bad it was. We just took it as something that he was suffering from. However I remember Pat saying, "At least it's not AIDS."

18. On 6 May 2003, Pat had been to work and returned before lunch with a terrible headache, which he said no pills could cure. We already had an appointment at the GP's surgery that evening; Pat was seen by another doctor the previous week in relation to numbness he had suffered on the left hand side of his face and hand, that doctor said the 'numbness' was a 'virus'. In the evening, we saw his own doctor who said the numbness on the left hand side of his face and hand was not a stroke and he was prescribed antibiotics. As he became increasingly unwell during the evening and with his situation getting gradually worse I was unable to administer the antibiotics. An emergency doctor was called and advised that I call an ambulance and we went to Lister Hospital. The doctors told us that if it was a small bleed they would get him to London but if it was a large bleed there was nothing they could do. He passed away 4 days later, on 10 May 2003.

19. It was only after Pat had passed away and reading through the medical paperwork that I came to realize how much mental anguish he must have gone through, not only with Hepatitis C but more so with the possibility of AIDS which, with the latter, he never discussed with me.

20. Pat had no treatment whatsoever for Hepatitis C. I am not aware of any discussions about treatment as I didn't go in to see the doctors with him.

21. However I do know that after the diagnosis, Pat waited for a referral, but then he received a letter of apology from Lister hospital which stated that a referral would be given within 16 months with a further 8 weeks' notice of the date, thereby making it an 18 month wait - I cannot find a copy of this letter, but it is mentioned in Pat's letter to Dr GRO-D **(Exhibit WITN3304003).**

22. After being informed of such a long wait for an appointment we discussed taking out an extra mortgage on the house and getting private treatment.

23. I wrote to Alistair Campbell, who was in the government at that time and had something to do with Social Services, for help with the waiting time. However, I received a reply from the Stevenage Borough Council telling us that there was nothing that could be done for Pat - unfortunately, I cannot find copies of these letters.

24. We also wrote to Alan Milburn, who was also in the Government, on 5 January 2002 to complain about the 18 month wait.

25. We received a letter dated 27 February 2002 from Lister hospital in which they requested Pat to contact Dr Catterall to arrange an appointment for 2 April 2002 - I cannot find a copy of this letter. Pat went to see Dr Catterall and then privately to a doctor at Pinehill hospital in Hitchin. The doctor at Pinehill hospital advised us that it would be too expensive to have the tests done there and that it would be better to seek free treatment. Pat was referred to the Royal Free Hospital, and he told me that at his last session with the doctors, they told him that it was about time he had a liver biopsy and that it would be rather nasty. Pat had an appointment for July 2003 but did not attend, as he passed away on 10 May 2003.

26. We also received a letter dated 1 March 2002 from the Department of Health about the waiting times for referrals and subsequent appointments, and information about putting in a complaint to the hospital trust about the time it took to communicate the Hepatitis C diagnosis (**Exhibit WITN3304005**). Following this,

Pat complained in a letter dated 24 May 2002 to Lister Hospital. He received a response from Lister hospital dated 20 June 2002 **(Exhibit WITN2204006)**.

27. I am unaware whether Pat told other health care professionals about his Hepatitis C infection.

28. After my husband's death, I put in a complaint to Mr Nick Carver at the Lister hospital on 28 March 2006 (**Exhibit WITN3304007**) and received a reply on 3 May 2006 (**Exhibit WITN3304008**). After receiving Mr Carver's letter I was very upset that my husband had not been informed of the health risks involved regarding his treatment and also not given more detailed information. This should have been done as a matter of priority and urgency.

29. There was no impact on Pat's private, family and social life. As far as we knew he just had Hepatitis C. I don't know whether Pat realized how infectious it was. We carried on as normal after we were told about his diagnosis.

30. The family were unaware of his infection and, looking back, neither of us fully really realized what the consequences could lead to. The family knew of his haemophilia and are now aware of the infection.

31. There was no financial impact on Pat. We carried on as normal. Pat was working right up until the day he was taken into the hospital on the evening of 6 May 2003.

32. There was no impact on plans for further education.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

33. No psychological support was offered to me, and if it had been offered to Pat, I have no doubt that he would have told me about it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. I found out about the England Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS) after reading about it in the papers. I contacted the EIBSS for the paperwork, which they sent to me. I completed it with the assistance of one of my sons, and they paid me £20,000 on 20 August 2018.

35. I was told by the EIBSS that if I needed any assistance I must contact them. There were no obstacles throughout the process at all, it went through smoothly. There were no preconditions imposed before I made the application or before I received the payment. It was only a matter of months after I had applied for the payment and I received it the same year. I made no application for anything after that. I just accepted their findings. I didn't find out whether I could apply for anything else as everything seemed clear from the information given.

36. In December 2018 I received a payment of £531 for heating from the EIBSS and was unaware that I would receive it each year.

37. Pat was unaware of the EIBSS application because I only discovered it in the past couple of years.

38. Also, in preparing for this witness statement, I noticed that I had contacted the Skipton Fund on 9 August 2005 to request an application form for making a claim in relation to a deceased party, but I cannot recall what happened after.

39. I have no observations to make around financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

40. After Pat's death and on 27 February 2006, I went to see a solicitor to discuss a potential claim for medical negligence, but I was advised that unless I knew the

person who had administered the drug that there was nothing I could do and I could go no further. Pat and I did not take part in any litigation.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 13/3/2020