

Witness Name: Kanubhai Patel

Statement No.: WITN3342001

Exhibit: WITN3342002

Dated: 30th JULY 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KANUBHAI PATEL

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

I, Kanubhai Patel, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Kanubhai Patel. My date of birth is GRO-C 1949, and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired design engineer, and I am married with one daughter.
2. I intend to speak about my mother, Deviben Patel. I believe she was infected with the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV") as a result of being given a blood transfusion.
3. In particular, I will discuss 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.

4. I confirm that I am not legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to take my witness statement.
5. This testimony is based upon my recollections, which are to the best of my knowledge, true. Given the length of time since the events, however, some details have been lost.

Section 2. How Affected

6. My mother was born in India in 1922. I do not know her exact date of birth. Her passport merely states her date of birth as '1922'. She never celebrated her birthday either, so I have been unable to provide the date of her birth.
7. My mother was a housewife and mother. She never worked, but raised us and cooked for the whole family. At special events she would cook for the community. Both of my parents were teetotal; my mother never drank alcohol in her life.
8. I lived with her, my brother Satish, my sister Manhu and my father Prabhubhai in Nairobi until I turned 15. I had completed a City and Guild vocation aged 13, and asked my father if I could move to the UK. At 15 I was quite mature, so I contacted a friend who lived in GRO-C, and moved to Lancashire on 9 April 1965.
9. I worked as an undergraduate for Courtaulds, at the time the world's leading textile manufacturer. They gave me a job as an engineer, designing textile machines for them.

10. My family, including my brother, sister and parents, moved to the UK on the 26th September 1971. I had been in regular contact with them and knew that my mother's health had always been fine before she came to the UK. She had had no problems with childbirth, had never had a blood transfusion, and had never needed to see a doctor in her life!
11. However, she began to feel ill in around 1974. She suffered from sharp stomach pains, and went to Bolton General Hospital for treatment. Her GP, who worked at a health centre on Cannon Street in Bolton, was called Dr Chatterjee. I suppose he must have referred her.
12. I recall the doctors investigating her kidneys, stomach and other areas for the source of her stomach pain. She was in and out of hospital regularly, and in 1975, she began to be treated with a variety of strong medications. She took a number of tablets each day. I cannot recall what they were called. I remember it was in 1975, as I was married in July of that year.
13. I recall, and share this recollection with my sister, that the doctors in Bolton General Hospital at this time were terrified about Asians and other people coming from abroad bringing tuberculosis ("TB") into the country. This was the assumption about foreigners at the time.
14. The treatments did not work and my mother continued to have severe stomach pain. Later that year (1975), she was forced to go into Salford Hope Hospital. The pain was very severe, and she began to bleed profusely from her back passage.

15. The consultant in charge was a Professor Turnberg. I remember he was an Englishman, who spoke very well. He saw and treated my mother. I spoke to him several times. I would say he was in his 40s at the time. I remember he was a Professor at Manchester University and often lectured there. I assume he specialised in gastroenterology, but I cannot confirm this.
16. My family and I were told her only chance of survival was to put her on a continuous blood transfusion in an attempt to help the blood coagulate and stop the bleeding long enough to perform an endoscopy and locate the site of the bleeding.
17. My mother underwent 4-5 hours of continuous blood transfusion, using over 10 pints of blood. I remember there was an unbelievable amount of blood. The bleeding finally stopped, and the doctors went in with an endoscope.
18. They confirmed that a duodenal ulcer had burst, causing the bleeding. I believe this ulcer was likely the cause of her stomach pain, and not TB.
19. The various doctors told my family, including myself, that the bleeding stoppage was temporary, and that should it restart my mother would not survive. We were told the only chance was to operate immediately, whilst the bleeding had stopped, but that it would be risky, with a very high risk of failure.
20. We were told nothing about the risks of infection or viruses from the blood transfusion. I remember my father giving written consent for the operation to go ahead, but no other information was given.
21. My mother did not start bleeding again, and the doctors were able to successfully complete the procedure, removing the ulcer.

22. The duodenal ulcer was successfully cured, however, my mother was in a coma for around a week following the operation. She managed to recover however, and was able to leave hospital soon after she woke up.
23. I remember when my mother came out of the hospital; the white parts of her eyes were yellow. I know now this meant she was jaundiced. She never complained about it, but we all noticed. I do not recall her skin going yellow; I thought her skin was perfect.
24. My mother was given a strict diet after she was discharged, with clear instructions not to eat spicy food. No mention of any ongoing infections or viruses was given to us. She went back home to continue living with my father, brother and sister. I lived with my wife at this time. My sister moved out a year or so later.
25. My mother suffered from serious liver complications resulting from her blood transfusion, and was continuously back in Bolton General and Salford Hope Hospitals to assess her liver. I strongly suspect my mother was infected with HCV from her continuous blood transfusion.
26. My mother was rushed to Bolton General Hospital again on around 14 July 1979. I believe she had the same stomach pains again. I informed the medical staff there that she was under the care of Professor Turnberg at Salford Hope Hospital, and that they should contact him, but I do not believe they ever did.
27. I recall our family was told to wear aprons and masks if we wanted to be by her bedside. We wore them, but were not ever given an explanation for this. This was a very difficult period for me, and my family, as my mother was clearly deteriorating. We weren't even allowed to touch her body. My family lived with her, and we had been visiting her in hospital for years! We went home frustrated and upset.

28. My mum sadly passed away on 16 July 1979. I had driven that morning from [GRO-C] to see her, and was the first to arrive. I saw my mum lying there, having passed away. I remember that they took me to another room and offered me a cigarette; I have never smoked in my life! I was a spokesman for the tobacco industry for over 9 years, and never once was offered a cigarette!
29. I recall one of the nurses speaking to my sister that day and told her my mother had hepatitis. I have spoken with my sister about this, and she confirmed my recollections. My sister does not recall hearing which type of hepatitis this was, but I believe now this was HCV.
30. It was only as she was passing away that Bolton General Hospital seemed to think she had TB. We were never told before then that she actually had TB. If she did, we would have had to take precautions, or isolate her to some extent. TB does not appear overnight!
31. This is why I believe she did not have it. I believe her stomach pain was caused by the ulcer, and that her jaundice and other symptoms were caused by HCV.
32. My mother was never officially diagnosed with HCV, so the risks of transmission were never explained to my family.
33. I exhibit my mother's death certificate [WITN3342002], dated 16 July 1979. It claims that she died from three main causes:
34. The first states 'disseminated intravascular coagulation'. Liver disease, such as HCV, is a risk factor for disseminated intravascular coagulation.
35. The second is liver failure. This would be consistent with HCV.

36. The third shows 'TB of liver'. I do not believe my mother ever suffered from TB, and that this was included because of the fears of infection from people from Asia.
37. As a result of the Hospital's fears over TB, the casket at my mother's funeral was sealed. Nobody could see my mum or say goodbye to her. People had come from abroad and couldn't pay their respects. This was very difficult for us all.

Section 3. Other Infections

38. I do not believe my mum received any infections from her blood transfusion other than HCV, however, it is possible she did.

Section 4. Consent

39. I strongly believe my mother was treated without her knowledge, because she couldn't speak English at all! I do not believe she was asked anything, or informed as to why she was treated.
40. My sister was the main translator. Myself, my sister and my brother all visited my mother regularly, along with my father. I do not recall much in the way of explanations being given.
41. I certainly do not believe she was given adequate information. They would just treat her and give a short explanation to my father or one of us afterward.
42. I recall that on a number of occasions, students would come round with the Professor to see my mother. I noticed this when I visited her. I know that Professor Turnberg was a lecturer at Manchester University, but I have no indication that he was using my mother's treatment for research.

Section 5. Impact

43. HCV had physical and mental effects on my mother. Her liver was clearly damaged enough so as to be a leading cause of her death.
44. My mother became very thin, and lost a lot of weight before she passed away. Outwardly, she still looked good however. She continued to cook for the family. She had to cook special food for herself, without spices.
45. I never noticed her being tired, but she began to rarely go out. Prior to the blood transfusion she was a very sociable person. We had grown up in a large community and my mother was used to visiting others. Her brother lived only a few hundred yards away, and she used to see him all the time. However, after the transfusion she began to stay in more.
46. As time progressed, she became effectively housebound. She felt very unwell all the time. She never fainted or vomited that I am aware of, but she began to become quieter and more reserved. Her personality changed.
47. With the knowledge I have now, I understand that she was depressed. My mother was taking a number of prescribed tablets each day, and I believe this treatment contributed to her depression.
48. I could see my mother getting iller and iller. She became subdued and didn't talk to us as she would have done. It felt that nearer the end she kind of gave up and decided to stop living.

49. I am not aware of instances in which my mother's infected status impacted upon her medical or dental treatment. In fact, I don't believe my mother ever visited a dentist! I do not remember any of the hospitals isolating her in any way either. Even when my sister visited from Zimbabwe, she and her children were allowed to see her and nobody appeared to treat her any differently.
50. I do not believe this would have been the case if my mother had TB, given its infectiousness and fears around it.
51. The depression caused by my mother's infection and treatment affected my whole family both in our private and social lives.
52. My father was seriously impacted by my mother's infection, as he was so close to her. He would often take time off work to spend time with her in hospital. My father was left alone. Her loss affected him psychologically; he had been with her for so many years. They used to spend all their time together and she had cooked for him everyday.
53. My sister was working at the tax office at the time, and would also take time off work to visit my mother. After the transfusion my mother deteriorated and my sister had to travel to visit her in hospital regularly.
54. My brother had been in his final year at Salford University, studying to become an Aeronautical Engineer. He was affected the most by my mother's depression, illness and eventual death. He had to retake his final exams it affected him so much.
55. Travelling to visit my mother in hospital after the transfusion took a toll on myself and also my wife. It was difficult for me to get days off work to see her. I had to take time off to visit her, which affected my work. At the time I was working in a drawing office, designing power units for heavy goods vehicles.

56. We had just moved to a house in [GRO-C] and had to keep travelling to [GRO-C] and Salford to visit my mother. The travelling back and forth was tiring, and her depression affected us all. I was very sad, and my mother's passing was a shock to the system. It was the first death in the family.
57. I remember visiting her in hospital, over and over. In particular I remember the smell. After my mother's infection I hated going to the hospital to see her. It was the same smell again and again.
58. There was no stigma as far as I was concerned. We were not under the impression she had HCV at the time.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

59. To the best of my knowledge, my mother had no difficulty in receiving treatment or medical care.
60. In those days there was no counselling or psychological support available that I know of. My mother never asked for any, but none was made available certainly.
61. I never felt that we were unable to obtain certain medication for my mother. I recall visiting private doctors with her and my father and I am not aware of any other medicines that my mother could have been prescribed.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

62. I have never asked for any financial assistance as a result of my mother's infection and treatment. To the best of my knowledge, none of my family have either.

63. I have been asked if I have any comments on compensation, trusts and funds. I have no comment to make on this matter.

Section 8. Other Issues

64. I have taken no part in campaigning or litigation in this matter.
65. I have made significant efforts to obtain my mother's medical records. I believe there will be evidence she was infected with HCV from contaminated blood. I have rung, emailed and otherwise contacted every hospital my mother was admitted to. I even tried the NHS head office in London. None of them have given me any information back.
66. Both Bolton General Hospital and my mother's local GP surgery informed me that they do not keep records for longer than 25 years.
67. Salford Hope Hospital informed me that they keep records for 30 years, but have asked that I provide my mother's NHS number in order to obtain her medical records. I do not know her NHS number, and have been unable to obtain this either. She was treated by the NHS many times during the 1970s and so there must have been a NHS number.
68. I think there must be some medical records of my mother's infection and treatment somewhere, whether on a microfiche or stored in another manner. I have asked the Inquiry to help me locate her medical records.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 30th JULY 2019.