

Witness Name: Phillip John Evans

Statement No: WITN3374001

Exhibits: WITN3374002

Dated: September 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PHILLIP JOHN EVANS

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I, Phillip John Evans will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Phillip John Evans. I live with my wife and family at GRO-C  
GRO-C My date of birth  
is GRO-C 1961. I am a Pharmacologist and am presently between jobs.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late father, John Walter Evans who was  
born on GRO-C 1930 and died on 15th April 1981, aged 50.
3. I believe that my father was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of being given  
contaminated blood products.
4. My mother's name was Jacqueline Ann Evans. Her date of birth was GRO-C  
GRO-C 1935 and she died on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2000. My sister, Janice Ann Evans,  
has provided her own statement to the Inquiry.

5. I married on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1993 and I have 2 children, Callum born in 1996 and Reanne born in 1998.
6. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical records.

## **Section 2. How infected**

7. On the 18 May 1977, my sister Janice was studying at Swansea College and my mother was attending the Chelsea Flower Show. I was with my father at home and as it was a nice sunny day, I suggested that we go out for a meal. My father drove us to the restaurant. For some reason on the way to the restaurant he swerved, and we hit a tree; the restaurant was about 20 minutes from our house and I think I was dozing at the time. I went through the windscreen and I do not remember much of what happened next. I still have scarring to my face from that day. We were both taken to hospital by ambulance. At this point I was semi conscious but all I remember is Dad screaming at the top of his lungs.
8. I did not know the extent of my dads' injuries at the time. I later discovered that my dad had broken his femur and we were both taken by ambulance to Haverfordwest Hospital which is now Withybush General Hospital. He was given morphine; he was in so much pain. I remember him being high as a kite. His leg was flopping to one side as it had been broken in the accident. I understand the femur produces the main blood supply to the body. The hospital operated on him and as a consequence of his injuries, he required, and was given, a blood transfusion. I do not know if the blood transfusion was life saving or not but can only presume it was.
9. Unfortunately, I have no medical records in respect of the procedures carried out.

10. My dad went into the operating theatre multiple times after the initial accident having had to have a metal rod inserted in his leg. They had to readjust the screws on a couple of occasions, and he was put in traction.

11. Prior to this road traffic accident in 1977 my dad had no serious health issues. Following this accident, he remained in hospital for 16 weeks as he was in traction. He was completely bedridden and had to be bed bathed.

12. My father died in 1981. To be honest I have always been confused about my father's death; it has never made sense to me. Dad told me that he had Hepatitis, but he never told me how he had got it. He also told me that he had had a blood transfusion, but no connection was made. I do not have his medical records. I believe that he contracted Hepatitis C from the blood transfusion given to him following the road traffic accident.

13. Over the years I have asked myself how he had contracted such a virus. In the report from the coroner's office it states that Dad suffered with Hepatitis. There is no mention of "C" but at the time I understand it was not categorised as such.

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

14. I do not know if my father was infected with anything other than Hepatitis. I wasn't privy to information about my dad's diagnosis and I do not know if he was ever informed about other infections.

### **Section 4. Consent**

15. I do not know if my dad was treated or tested without his knowledge or consent.

16. I do not know if my dad was treated or tested for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

17. I attach as Exhibit WITN3374002 a copy of my father's death certificate. The cause of death is stated as paracetamol poisoning. My Dad was a pharmacist and was well known within the community. After my father passed away, a newspaper article was published in our local paper stating that the local pharmacist died from paracetamol poisoning. The Coroner at my father's Inquest recorded an open verdict and ruled out any chance of suicide. My father was well respected in the area.
18. There was no evidence to suggest that my father had overdosed on paracetamol and I surmise that given his profession as a pharmacist, had he been trying to commit suicide, he would have had access to other more suitable drugs. Furthermore, my dad never indicated to anyone that he had intended to take his own life.
19. I am a Pharmacologist and I more recently started researching the symptoms of Hepatitis C, and found that it causes headaches. The liver is the largest metabolising organ in the body and metabolises and detoxifies toxins. Liver failure causes headaches as the body has a reduced ability to metabolise and excrete toxins. That is why I believe Dad took paracetamol for pain relief. In those days Ibuprofen was not available "over the counter" being available on prescription only. Of course, in Dad's profession had he wanted to, he would have had access to stronger drugs, but as far as I was aware, he only ever took paracetamol.
20. I have further concluded he was given contaminated blood during his surgery as my father's health deteriorated following his period in hospital after the road traffic accident. He started losing weight and in later photographs of him, he looked incredibly gaunt. He became weaker, and on Janice's wedding day, at times he couldn't handle moving about without some form of support. When you see a family member every day you do not notice gradual changes but our parent's good friend, Moya Cousins noticed that he had a yellow pigmentation to his skin and that he became extremely depressed.

21. I was a student at Sunderland Polytechnic studying pharmacology in 1979. I was young; I had my future ahead of me and I am not sure that I was fully aware of the seriousness of his failing health. After he came out of hospital, he had a supporting hinge fitted around his knee and walked with crutches and had a permanent limp. He began to get weaker, losing weight and was increasingly worried about his health. I don't think he wanted to burden me as he wanted me to concentrate on my studies. Parents tend to keep health worries away from their children, but his appetite went, and he started getting headaches.

22. On 15th April 1981 at 12.15am, I met my Dad in the hallway, and we had a cigarette together. In general, he seemed more upbeat than he had been but a little dishevelled having spent the day in bed feeling unwell. Subsequently I went to bed and I was woken the next morning by my Mum calling him and she was getting louder. I got up and went into his room and Dad was lifeless. I did not know what to do but I started pressing on his chest. Mum called Dr Thomas who pronounced my Dad dead.

23. In terms of private, family and social life, pharmacists were, and still are to some extent respected and likewise, my father was a person whom the local community respected. Business wasn't always good, but when it was good, it was brilliant. We went on many holidays in the 1970s at a time when very few people went on holiday. Our family was never the same after he died. We hardly went on holiday together and my sister and I drifted apart.

24. I had a very happy childhood; I could not have wished for better parents and my dad was my hero. When he died, all that happiness just disappeared, and it was so hard seeing mum go through the emotions she did. Janice and my mother attended the inquest, I was back in Sunderland. According to my sister the coroner was clear in his evidence and stated: "I firmly reject that Mr Evans, with the amount of substance in his stomach, took his own life" and he recorded an open verdict.

25. I have not seen a copy of the post-mortem report. We had no problems with the undertakers and arrangements for my father's funeral.

26. My Mum was so confused; we all were. They adored each other and she never really got over his death. She died from motor neurone disease. When she was dying Janice said to her that she would soon see Dad. She said that she would tell him to "piss off" as he had left her. Mum went to her death after all those years believing he killed himself. She had convinced herself of this and lived her life in isolation and grief.
27. I was 20 when Dad died. I never really wanted to leave Wales as I had a fantastic family whom I loved to bits and I would not change them for the world, but going back to when I was a naïve 20 year old who knew nothing of the world, what does a lad with a pharmacology degree in 1982 do living at home in West Wales? I therefore accepted a job offer in Lincoln and settled there. I often phoned my mother from long distance, but she was hard to talk to as she was so sad. I sometimes wished I hadn't phoned her at all and that made me feel guilty.
28. I have suppressed this sadness and grief for years until the Inquiry commenced. As snippets of the Inquiry were being released to the public, I started to piece everything together. I spent a lot of time last year conducting research, but it has unleashed 38 years of deep hidden emotions. I feel I have had to mourn in isolation as I made the decision to move away.
29. The thing that eats me up the most is that on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1977 if I had not persuaded my father to go out for a meal, none of this would have ever happened. If I had not persuaded him to go out as he really wanted to stay at home, just that one sentence, none of this would have happened. I feel responsible for everyone's unhappiness. I have tried putting it behind me as I have had to earn a living for myself, but I have been very hard on myself.
30. Anytime I have to discuss this in conversation, a switch is triggered inside me and I end up crying every time. I only have to think about it, and I start crying. I was out with an ex-colleague having a drink in the pub. My friend asked how the inquiry was going and suddenly I was in floods of tears.

31. I know that I need counselling and last year I approached a private counsellor. I have kept it bottled up over the years and still haven't attended any sessions yet. I have her email address. My son is angry that I haven't had this treatment yet.
32. My father was diagnosed with Hepatitis, but I don't recall any stigma surrounding it. However, due to the newspaper article regarding paracetamol poisoning, our local community believed that my father had taken his own life. This highly impacted on my mother as she was a proud woman. She found it increasingly difficult to go out into town with her head held high and felt that people were whispering about her behind her back. People did not know how to approach my mother and for a while it became the talk of the town.
33. Losing my father changed the course of my life. Before starting my A Levels, I wanted to study Pharmacy and take over my father's shop. Unfortunately, I did not achieve the required A Level results, so I went to Sunderland Polytechnic to study Pharmacology from 1979 to 1982. At the time, resitting A Levels was uncommon, so Dad recommended that I study the Pharmacology degree offered to me.
34. When my father passed away, I was midway through my degree and had to return to complete it. I nearly jacked it in but decided to follow it through till the end.
35. After my graduation, had Dad been alive, I may have continued studying. Dad would have advised me on my career prospects or would have put me in touch with people who were able to help me. He would have guided me in the right direction. My mother was unable to advise me as she lacked the knowledge. In any event she was in mourning all her life and was not in a position to advise or guide me.
36. I was out of work for 12 months after returning home from university and spent my time applying for jobs. Eventually I received a call from a lecturer at Sunderland Polytechnic who shared a job opportunity with me. The company

was called Battle, Hayward and Bower in Lincoln. Upon passing the interview, I got the job and settled down in Lincoln. I was offered a job as a lab assistant and worked my way up to technical manager. I spent 36 years there and resigned in July 2019.

37. In terms of my mother's financial situation, she went from being reasonably comfortable to falling into financial difficulties. She was forced to downsize. Furthermore, she never had confidence to find a job as she had been a stay at home mother all of her life, just helping out in the Pharmacy during busy times. Janice and I had our own mortgages to pay and we had no spare cash to help her. She went on holidays to escape the grief and spent money on that which she probably should not have done.

38. My father's mother was alive at the time of Dad's death. To lose a child must be absolutely devastating. She lived only half a mile from Dad and was so proud of her son. Mum had to break the news of Dad's death to her and she never really recovered. She said that He should have taken me not my Dad. She died in 1984.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

39. No counselling or psychological support was made available to me in consequence of what happened. As I have mentioned, I am in touch with a private counsellor. I sourced this help myself, but I still have not yet attended any sessions.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**



40. No member of my family received any financial assistance as a result of my father being infected by contaminated blood.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

41. There is nothing we can do about the death of my father and no matter the outcome; it will not bring my parents back to life.

42. Regardless of whether the Public Inquiry agrees with my suspicion that my father had been infected by contaminated blood, I feel I have now achieved a sense of closure and I do believe that it was a result of the blood transfusion that my father passed away as he did. It is my belief that the liver (which metabolises and detoxifies the drug paracetamol), was so badly damaged by the Hepatitis that my father contracted from the blood transfusion, that he could not eliminate the drug effectively. This led to normal dosage levels of paracetamol becoming essentially toxic leading to his death. His health was failing, and as far as I am aware there was no treatment for Hepatitis at that time. If he had not died in this manner, he most likely would have died from liver failure at some point.

43. As final closure, I have yet to visit the place where my father's ashes were spread. I was away when my father's ashes were scattered, my sister spread them with my mother at the crematorium in my absence. My sister is going to show me where this is. I will go and spend some time there in quiet contemplation.

### **Anonymity**

44. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

45. If called I am willing to give oral evidence to the Inquiry

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed... GRO-C .....

Phillip John Evans

Dated... *11<sup>th</sup> September 2019* .....