

Witness Name: SUSAN DAWSON
Statement No: WITN3397001
Exhibits: WITN3397002 - WITN3397004
Dated: September 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SUSAN DAWSON

I, SUSAN DAWSON will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Susan Dawson. I was born on GRO-C 1956 and I live at GRO-
GRO-C with my husband. I have one daughter (age 28). I work as a part-time tutor.
2. I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. My mother, Maureen Peach, was born on GRO-C 1937. My mother was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) in 1971 following a blood transfusion post child birth. She passed away on 18 November 1990, aged 53.
3. I am aware that my brothers Steven Peach and Jeffery Peach and my sisters Diane Smith and Janice Hedges will also be giving statements. Our brother David Peach sadly passed away on 18 May 2016 from Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother's medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are referred to in this statement.

Section 2. How infected

5. My mother was infected with HCV from a blood transfusion she was given after the birth of her sixth and youngest child, Jeffrey. Jeffrey was born on GRO-C GRO-C 1971 at the Hedon Road Maternity Hospital, Hull (which has since closed down). My mother needed the blood transfusion due to severe blood loss.
6. I do not know if any information or advice was provided to my mother beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection.
7. My mother was infected with HCV as a result of being given blood products with HCV.
8. I do not know if my mother knew she was infected with HCV. If she did know she did not tell me. I therefore do not know what information or advice she may have been offered.
9. I found out about my mother's infected status after she had passed away, when I saw the medical certificate of cause of death which was completed by her doctor. The certificate said that she had Hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver.
10. I recently applied for a copy of my mother's death certificate. For some reason, the cause of death on the death certificate is different from the cause of death on the medical certificate which I saw following her death. Her death certificate states that she died from overwhelming sepsis, pneumonia, liver transplant and primary biliary cirrhosis. I attach a copy of the death certificate to this statement marked WITN3397002.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I do not know if my mother received any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

12. I am not able to say if my mother gave her consent for the blood transfusion given on 7 March 1971.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. Up until 1971, when my brother Jeffrey was born, my mother was fit and healthy. She had her first five children at home in 1956, 1959, 1960, 1966, and 1968. Due to complications with her sixth pregnancy she was taken to the hospital to deliver her baby. Jeffrey weighed 10 lbs and was born by ventouse. My mother was 34 years old when Jeffrey was born.

14. When I saw my mother after Jeffrey was born she looked dreadful, very poorly. She was weak for a long time after this and then she picked up a bit. She however never fully recovered. I remember my mother saying to me some considerable time after Jeffrey was born that you can have five children real easy, but it's the sixth one that finishes you off!

15. Up until that point, my mother was very active. I remember that we used to go to a quiet seaside town, we would play cricket at midnight and my mother would be in the middle of it. She would run up and down and scream with laughter.

16. My mother was used to getting on after having a baby but after her 6th child things were different. She no longer had the same energy or interest in life, it seemed like life had become a drudgery. She focused her energy on looking after Jeffrey and did not seem to be able to do much else.

17. My father passed away about 3 years after Jeffrey was born. I was 17 years old at the time.

18. My mother seemed to give in to her illness around the time Jeffrey started school. This would have been around 1976.

19. Over the next few years my mother's health steadily declined. She was tired, constantly worn out, stressed. Sometimes she seemed angry and at other times she seemed not bothered, detached.
20. In the 1980s, my mother's ill health gathered pace. Her teeth became badly decayed and she had them all extracted at the same time. I believe this to have been about 1981.
21. In 1988 my mother went into hospital to have her gall bladder removed. I believe this to have been at Princess Royal Hospital, Hull (which has since shut down).
22. Around 1988 her health problems increased rapidly. During this period my memories of my mother seem to be nothing more than a recollection of her ill-health and medical appointments.
23. She lost a lot of weight. She had always been a large healthy lady with a commanding presence but she seemed to just disappear over the years. I have some photographs taken in 1990 and when you look at them you would think my mother was 80 years old not 53.
24. My mother was jaundiced for a very long time. We became used to seeing her like that; it was our 'normal'.
25. I remember one occasion when my mother rang me at work (I was heavily pregnant so it must have been around July 1990) she was sobbing saying she had not had anything to eat that day and wasn't well enough to leave the house. I remember it being about 2.30pm. Luckily I worked flex-time so I was able to buy her some food and take it to her and then I went back to work.
26. During August 1990 my mother became really poorly. On one occasion she was unable to get out of the bath. The fire brigade, GP and an ambulance attended. This was humiliating for her. Once the fire brigade had managed to get her out of the bath she was taken to Hull Royal Infirmary (ward 21) by

ambulance. I had to persuade her to go in the ambulance because she did not want to.

27. During her time as a patient on ward 21 in 1990, my mother told me that a doctor had come to her bed side and taken a 'sample' of her liver. She said he had done this 'through her side' and without anesthetic. My mother told me that it was very distressing, frightening and excruciating. My mother was discharged from ward 21 on 11 August 1990 and given a follow up appointment to see Dr Bennett on 19 October 1990. My mother told me that the doctor had recommended she consider having a liver transplant. My mother discussed this with me, my brother and my sister. We encouraged her to consider a liver transplant as we did not want to lose her. I don't remember being given a reason why she needed the transplant. My mother decided to go ahead with being considered for a liver transplant and was put on 'European alert' for a liver donor.

28. I attach to this statement marked WITN3397004 a form titled 'Going Home' which was completed on 10 August 1990 prior to my mother's discharge from hospital. The form states that the treatment she received in hospital was 'reduction of ascites'. The information on the form about my mother's physical capabilities on discharge is completely incorrect. The form states that she lived alone and was able to care for herself unaided. My mother did not live alone, my brother Jeffrey lived with her. She was also not able to care for herself unaided as the form suggested. I believe that the person who completed that form must have done so without asking or listening to my mother. I have handwritten my comments on to the form.

29. I never really knew fully what was wrong with my mother. I knew there was a problem with her liver but never knew what caused it. I went with my mother to various hospital appointments however she did not want me to go in to see the doctor with her. I found it difficult but I had to respect her wishes. When I would ask her what the doctor had said and she would just reply '*he said come back in two months*'.

30. I am not aware of what treatment or medication my mother may have been on. I remember seeing a card from my mother's GP which stated that she had been given vitamin infections and that 'observations' were made. I attach to this statement marked WITN3397003 a copy of community nursing services records from 4 August 1990 which confirm that my mother was at the time being treated with Vitamins K, D and A. The document also refers to her having a history of jaundice.
31. My mother was admitted to St James Hospital in September 1990. During a visit to see her, I overheard Professor Giles say to his colleagues about my mother *'we haven't got long with this one'*. My mother had her first liver transplant on or about 1 October 1990. She had a second liver transplant a week later. I went to see her and on one visit. I was stroking her face she just rested her head in my hand.
32. My mother passed away on 18 November 1990. The medical certificate completed by the doctor at the time stated 'Hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver' as cause of death. I thought you got cirrhosis if you had a drinking problem. I was therefore surprised to see it on the certificate.
33. My mother was a very private person and kept things to herself. She used to have the philosophy that what you don't know doesn't hurt you and therefore she often kept things from her children. As a child, I remember having my tonsils taken out at the age of 7. My mother didn't tell me about this until we got to the hospital to have the procedure! Over the years, there were lots of things that she did not tell us. Looking back now, I believe it is possible that she knew about her HCV infection but decided not to tell me. Perhaps this was why she would not let me come into her hospital appointments with her.
34. Soon after my mother's death, I was at my GP and he told a nurse my mother had died from liver complications. He had a strange look on his face as if he was sharing some dark secret. I was puzzled by this but too preoccupied with my new baby to give it much thought. At the time I hadn't understood that my

mother had been infected with HCV. I was also still reeling from my mother's death and missing her terribly when I felt I needed her the most.

35. When my mother left school she had aspirations to become a nurse. My mother's career goals were put on hold whilst she brought up her children. My father died on 17 May 1974 leaving my mother to take care of their six children. She remained single/widowed until her death. She had a lot of ideas and aspirations of what she wanted to do but she never got the opportunity. She was only 34 when her last child was born, so, if she had not lost her health I believe she would have had the opportunity to pursue her aspirations.
36. My mother went from being a busy mum to constantly being ill for about the last 15 years of her life. My mother became unable to do basic tasks like shopping and housework. It fell to me and my siblings to take it in turns to complete these tasks for her.
37. The effect on the family has been devastating for her children and her grandchildren. How can we quantify the loss of our mother and grandmother at such a young age and so needlessly?
38. My mother loved babies and young children. If she saw a baby she always wanted to hold them. All my mother wanted for the latter part of her life was to be a grandma.
39. My baby was born a week before my mother's first liver transplant. Early in my pregnancy I was told my baby would probably be born with Downs Syndrome and that I should consider having an abortion. I had no one to discuss my fears and concerns with. My mother was unwell and I couldn't discuss this with her. My then, husband made the decision to get 'rid of the baby' as he did not want to spend his life looking after a 'disabled kid'. I made the decision to keep my baby and divorced him.
40. I found out the sex of my baby early even when I did not want to because I did not want my mother to miss out on knowing the sex of her grandchild.

41. The last time I was able to speak to my mother was when my baby was born. I asked if she wanted to hold the baby and she said 'no' which is out of character. This makes me wonder if she knew she had HCV at that point. It seemed strange for someone who desperately wanted to be a grandma to not want to hold, hug and kiss their grandchild.
42. My brother Steve has a son who was 18 months old at the time. Steve told me that our mother did not want 'germs' and did not want her grandson to sit on her knee. She also said it was too painful. I wonder now if it was because she knew she was infected.
43. My daughter graduated in July 2018 with a masters Degree in Physiotherapy. She asked me on that day if I thought her grandma would be proud of her.
44. There have been so many incidents and occasions in my life which I would have dearly loved to have shared with my mother and to have had the support and guidance only a mother can give.
45. When I was 43 years old I had a hysterectomy and due to severe blood loss I was given a blood transfusion. I still worry that I too have been given infected blood. I did not know I had a blood transfusion until I woke up. When I woke up the surgeon was at the bottom of the bed saying he was sorry. I was back and fourth to the doctors for the next 2 years.
46. My mother's death affected us all. It was particularly hard on Jeffery because he was just 19 years old and still living with her at the time. When she died he was made homeless because the Council would not let him continue to live alone in the council property he had shared with my mother. We had a week to clear the house out. Jeffrey was just lost. He went to live with my sister for a while.

47. Steve was extremely close to our mother and took her to most of her medical appointments. He is still very distraught by her death and by the fact that she was infected with HCV.
48. Diane's son was the first grandson my mother had and I know my mother wanted to look after him while Diane went back to work, but mum was not well enough. She could not manage and it was sad. Diane used to spend a lot of time with my mother. She looks, sounds and acts like my mother.
49. David passed away from non Hodgkin's lymphoma. When researching my brother's condition, I have seen that this condition has been linked with HCV. I do not know if my brother was infected with HCV, but I do remember that he was very jaundiced before he passed away. I recall an occasion when as a child he cut himself very badly. His hand was bleeding and my mother was dealing with all this blood and treating him. I ran to the corner shop and rang for an ambulance.
50. Janice has had quite a lot of health problems so she has missed having her mother terribly. She has had cancer and it would have helped her to have her mother.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

51. I do not believe my mother was given the correct treatment for the condition she contracted.
52. I feel my mother was kept in the dark about the true nature and extent of her health problems.
53. I believe the liver transplant was given to my mother as a last resort. They could see she was dying and that there was no chance of it working. I feel like they just practiced on her

54. Perhaps if she had been diagnosed with HCV and treated for this early enough her liver would not have deteriorated to the point that it did.

55. I know my mother was given no support whatsoever in relation to her mental health.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

56. My mother was given no financial assistance as far as I am aware.

57. During her lengthy illness I worked two jobs and I used to give her my earnings from my second job. I remember receiving a telephone call from my mother, in a very distressed state. The bailiffs had come to cut off her electricity as she had not been able to pay her account. She told me she had even pawned her wedding ring for which she received £15. I agreed to pay the electricity account and I went to retrieve her wedding ring from the pawn brokers. This was a very degrading and demeaning experience for me and my mother.

58. When mum died she left £60 in her account. The only way we got my mother's body back from Leeds was because my brother contacted a local undertaker who agreed we could pay him over a year because we could not afford it. It's distressing to think that was all she had and we could not even get her back from Leeds. It was awful. I remember feeling so sad about it in the pit of my stomach.

Section 8. Other Issues

59. I would like justice for my mother. I want some acknowledgement, someone to say 'sorry, this shouldn't have happened'. I want someone to accept they got it wrong.

60. Maybe there was no awareness when the blood transfusion was given to her, but there was awareness later. Why was nothing done? I don't think my mother's infection was ever fully explained to her and I do not think she was treated properly for her illness.

61. My mum was robbed, her children were robbed and so were her grandchildren.

62. I believe that somebody, somewhere has tried to cover up the facts surrounding the infected blood issue. My mother was infected in the 1970s; this issue could have been sorted years ago.

63. My brother and sister have tried to access my mother's medical records but they were told they are 'missing'.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

64. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

65. I wish 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

Dated

11/9/19

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