

Witness Name: Neil Marcus Phillips

Statement No:WITN3405001

Exhibits:0

Dated: August 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF NEIL MARCUS PHILLIPS

I, Neil Marcus Phillips will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Neil Marcus Phillips and I was born on GRO-C 1961. I live at GRO-C
GRO-C County Durham, GRO-C I am not married but have one son who is 9 years old. I work as a bricklayer and have been self employed for about 30 years.
2. I had an accident when I was involved in a domestic attack and unfortunately severed one of my fingers.
3. I was taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI) and was given a blood transfusion. This resulted in my becoming infected with Hepatitis C (HCV).
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How infected

5. In the early 1980s, possibly around 1984, I suffered from a knife attack. It was an accident; a domestic argument that turned nasty and left me with a severed finger. I was admitted into the BRI for an operation to reattach my finger. I was in Ward E, a temporary ward, before I was moved and had an operation that lasted around 6 hours. They had to reassemble the bone and reconstruct my finger, the nerves and tendons and everything. The operation was a success. I was in my mid 20s at the time of this incident.
6. I had lost a lot of blood and so I was given a blood transfusion more or less as soon as I arrived at the hospital. I believe that it is likely I was then given more blood during the operation. I spent the rest of the week in hospital after my operation and had various tests during that time. I was admitted on a Monday and had the operation on either the Tuesday or Wednesday. I was in hospital for about 5 days.
7. Afterwards I had to go to the hospital regularly for rehabilitation and physiotherapy; they wanted to monitor the swelling and infection. I had a splint on my wrist and my finger needed regular exercise.
8. The memory is hazy to me and so I am not sure if I had one prolonged stay in the hospital for about a week and a half after my operation or if I was discharged in my splint and then came back about a week later, but nonetheless after about a week, it was discovered that I had been infected with HCV (then non A, non B hepatitis). I cannot remember the conversation exactly but I was told and I remember that I knew nothing about it.
9. After my rehab and physio check ups I was then readmitted, but I had no symptoms of Hepatitis. I cannot remember how much time had passed as that memory is very blurry but I remember being very jaundiced and my skin was yellow. I remember being hooked up to machines and having many tests in my time in hospital.

10. I was put on a heart monitor and was under the care of a top haematologist and liver specialist, Dr [GRO-D]. He was the head of the department. He explained to me that I had liver damage and I was confused because I had not gone in for anything concerning this. Dr [GRO-D] explained to me that I had developed Hepatitis C through this ordeal and so I was being put on Interferon treatment. I believe that I was infected with Hepatitis C from the blood transfusion I had, as I did not have this or an infected liver prior to the operation for my finger.
11. I cannot remember whether I received a letter or whether someone telephoned me about my liver infection and what the treatment plan was going to be.
12. When I was told about Hepatitis C I believe there was a pamphlet given to me about it. This was not adequate at all. Nothing was explained to me about what happened, why and how I was infected; I was just told that this is the situation now.
13. Details about Hepatitis C were given to me after I was diagnosed. This pamphlet came with the box of Interferon treatment.
14. Subsequently Dr [GRO-D] explained it in a very matter of fact way, saying that this is what had happened from the blood transfusion whilst I was in hospital care.
15. No information was given to me in regards to the risk of others being infected. Like everyone at that time, I did not know anything about Hepatitis C. We were all pretty naïve.

Section 3. Other Infections

16. I had no other infections as far as I am aware.

Section 4. Consent

17. I was tested and treated without my knowledge.
18. I found out that I was being tested when I was having liver biopsies and heart monitors but I just assumed it was all standard procedure. I did not know the real reason why I had had these tests.
19. All of these tests were done without my consent. They just told me that 'we are doing this', rather than actually asking me, so it did not seem that I had a choice. It was not an informed consent, although they were probably acting in my best interests. I was not given adequate information as to what they were doing.
20. I do believe that I was treated for research; being given the trial drug interferon. I feel I really was just a guinea pig.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

21. It affected me mentally after I had been told I had HCV and left me feeling worried and unclear. I felt weak and shaky at the time of diagnosis. I had to bear in mind that I would need treatment everyday, and so I felt quite defeated in a way; it was not nice to know.
22. I had cirrhosis of the liver. They told me this when I was in hospital; on the last few days of my stay. That is also when they gave me the Interferon. I did not know of any other treatments that might have been available, I just trusted their judgment.
23. After Dr. GRO-D told me I had been infected with Hepatitis C, he explained that I was being put on Interferon treatment.

24. I was put on Interferon almost immediately and before I left the hospital I had been shown how to inject myself in the stomach and so I was able to do the injections myself. I had to go to the hospital regularly for check ups, monitoring and blood tests.
25. I was monitored once a month when my weight was measured and blood samples were taken. I was initially going put on a 12 month course but I was then put on a 6 month course of Interferon, which I injected once a day into the fat tissue in my stomach area.
26. The Interferon treatment was successful, I did what they said and I stayed off drinking alcohol.
27. It was not easy taking these Interferon injections. I was working at the time and the injection points were right on my waist where the band of my jeans were which made it very uncomfortable for me.
28. The Interferon treatment made me dizzy and tired. I had to stay well hydrated and I still felt sick most of the time. I couldn't do things as normal while on the treatment. I lost a lot of weight. As I was still working during the treatment, it made this very hard as I struggled to even bend as I was always sore.
29. Having Hepatitis C also affected my relationships with other people as I was conscious that I had to be careful with and cuts and blood to avoid contaminating others.
30. I was aware that I had to have protective sex and be careful so as not to bleed. I did not tell anyone of my infection unless I was being intimate with them. I was ashamed and I did not want people to see me just as a carrier of this virus.
31. All this happened to me over maybe a 2 year period, from me being infected to being cleared of Hepatitis C through a trial drug; they just got lucky that it worked.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

32. I was never offered any psychological support but it would have been very helpful to talk about things.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. I have never received any financial support; I have never even been contacted in this regard by anyone or any trust or fund set up.

Section 8. Other Issues

34. I have no other issues I wish to raise in this regard.

Anonymity

35. I do not wish to be anonymous.

36. I would like to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Signed

Date 13-01-2020