

Witness Name: Rosemary Jane Baldry

Statement No: WITN3461001

Exhibits: WITN3461002 - 4

Dated: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

---

### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROSEMARY JANE BALDRY**

---

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

I, Rosemary Jane Baldry, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Rosemary Jane Baldry. My date of birth is GRO-C 1961 and my address is GRO-C, East Sussex, GRO-C. I live with my partner Phil and I have one son who lives close by. I am a postwoman and have worked for the Royal Mail since 2003.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with both the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which I contracted as a result of being given a blood transfusion after a Splenectomy in 1980. I was 18 years old.

3. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the impact it had on my life.
4. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

5. I had a very hard childhood and did not get on well with my parents. I left home at a young age to live in a bed-sit and at the age of 17 I fell pregnant with my son.
6. In August 1979 I found a lump on my neck, so I booked an appointment with my GP – Dr Davis at Roebuck Surgery. Some tests were taken and I was admitted to St Helens Hospital in Hastings. (The hospital no longer exists)
7. At the time I had a 6-month-old baby and I was living with a partner.
8. A lumpectomy was carried out in November 1979 and I received the results a week or so later. I distinctly remember it being my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday when I was operated on. They removed the lump and a week later I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. I had no support from my parents during this time.
9. Following the diagnosis I went back for an appointment with my GP and he explained that I could be treated in Maidstone or London, but suggested if I was well enough to opt for London.

10. On his recommendation, I was referred to St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.
11. It was discovered that my spleen had been infected with Hodgkin's disease, so the splenectomy was carried out at St Bart's. As the spleen contains a lot of blood, I recall blood being on hand for the procedure.
12. I was discharged not long after the procedure and told that I would require full mantle radiotherapy for 6-8 weeks. This also took place at St Bart's Hospital. A series of tests were taken before the treatment commenced.
13. Each day of the treatment I had to lie under a huge machine and I was blasted with radiation on both sides for 5-10 minutes. I stayed in hospital throughout the week and only returned home for the weekend.
14. After the course of radiotherapy finished, further tests were taken to see if the cancer had gone, but I required further radiation on my neck.
15. Once the cancer had cleared my visits to St Bart's steadily reduced over time.
16. I do have tattoos, a couple were done when I was 16, and they were done professionally. I had a blood test in 1979 and there was no evidence of any blood virus. I am therefore certain that my HBV and HCV was not due to the tattoo's.
17. I have been asked if I have ever been an intravenous drug user and the answer is no.
18. I found out that I had been infected with HBV in late 1981. A friend of mine knew someone that worked on an oilrig and needed somewhere to stay in between his stints of work. I took him in as a lodger to help my financial situation and to pay for a washing machine. The relationship was purely platonic and I hardly ever saw him.

19. I remember one day he came home from a doctor's appointment and told me that he had Hepatitis A. He did not want to scare me, but thought it was important that I knew.
20. I had an appointment at St Bart's not long after this, so I briefly mentioned that my lodger had been recently diagnosed with Hepatitis A. The doctor asked if I had been feeling okay, to which I explained that I did get tired often but had so for a number of years. I had always put this down to the Cancer. The doctor carried out some blood tests during the appointment.
21. Not long after I received a letter stating that I had Hepatitis, but it did not say what type. I was informed to see my doctor straight away. I recall being panicked after reading the letter.
22. I went to my GP and [GRO-C] were tested for Hepatitis. I [GRO-C] [GRO-C] but I tested positive for HBV.
23. I had no idea how I became infected with the virus. I knew that I could not have caught it from my lodger, because he had a different strain of hepatitis.
24. I asked various medical professionals where the virus came from, but they were adamant that I became infected from my lodger and I was made to feel as though it was my own fault. I remember talking to friends to say how upset I was over this.
25. I letter I received from T. A. Lister, consultant at the Department of Medical Oncology on 25 March 1981. I produce this letter as my exhibit **WITN3461002**. The letter states that I must have caught the infection from my friend who came to stay and that this is of no further cause for concern.

26. The consultant also sent a letter to my GP notifying him of my positive 'Australian antigen', which I exhibit as **WITN3461003**.
27. A blood test taken on 20 December 1979 and prior to the removal of my spleen states that I tested negative for the Australia Antigen, so I must have become infected from the blood received during the procedure. I exhibit this document as **WITN3461004**.
28. While receiving further cancer treatment at the Royal Marsden Hospital in 1992 or 3. (detailed below), I was asked if I wanted copies of my medical notes and correspondence. I accepted the offer and when reading through the letters I found out that I was HCV positive. I have tried to find this letter but unfortunately I cannot. I will ask the hospital and let you know if I receive an another copy.
29. I was horrified to find out that I also had been infected with HCV. I had no previous indication before reading the documentation that I had HCV. I questioned the consultant on my findings. He assumed that I already knew and it was being dealt with via my GP or at St Bart's Hospital.
30. I was never told that I had been tested for HCV. I did have a lot of blood tests because of the cancers, but I did not provide consent to be tested for HCV.
31. No one has ever stated my HCV genotype. I do feel that I have been kept in the dark about the Hepatitis.

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

32. To my knowledge I have not received any infections other than HBV and HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

33. My blood was tested for AIDS around 1993/4 and I consented to this. I was at the Royal Marsden for a routine check up, when I started to experience a terrible pain in my chest. An ECG was taken and the doctor decided to take further tests. This is when I first recall AIDS being mentioned.
34. Thankfully the test came back negative. I was told that if I did not hear anything from the hospital, everything was fine. I never worried about this because I hope someone would have picked it up along the line if I had been infected.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

35. I signed a consent form to receive blood during and after the splenectomy, but I was not warned of the associated risks.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

36. In 1992 my partner discovered a tiny lump on my breast and I was referred to the Royal Marsden Hospital. I had a lumpectomy and at the time of the procedure the surgeon said that I should be okay because the cancer was enclosed within the lump. It transpired that he was wrong.
37. The breast cancer was a direct result of the radiotherapy I received and the consultant has now admitted this is probably the likely case.
38. As it turned out, I found out in my next appointment that the cancer was not contained. I could not have any more radiotherapy because of the amount I had received for the Hodgkin's disease.

39. I was put on medication for 5 years to treat the cancer, during which I had regular appointments and mammograms at the Royal Marsden.
40. I split up from my partner in 1998 and I lived on my own for a long time. I started working for the Royal Mail.
41. In 2003 I went for a check up at the Royal Marsden and the mammogram picked up that the cancer had returned. I would have been 42 at the time. Two doctors explained that I would require a mastectomy. I asked if they could take everything away and reconstruct at the same time. They said that it was possible, but as a result it would be a very lengthy operation.
42. Everything went ahead and the double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery was carried out at the Royal Marsden.
43. I later had to have the reconstructive surgery redone because I went back to work too quickly after the first procedure.
44. I was never offered any treatment for HBV or HCV and at no point did the medical profession really acknowledge it or explain the potential damage the virus could cause me.
45. I have been aware of my HBV infection since the 1980s and HCV since 2003, as I said; no medical professional has ever mentioned anything about the dangers or the treatment available.
46. When I moved to GRO-C I changed my doctors' practice to the Old Town Surgery. I have always been open minded about telling medical professionals that I have hepatitis, so I informed the new doctor, Dr Rubery during an appointment concerning a hysterectomy in February 2018.
47. The doctor knew nothing about my infections, but I explained that it should be on my medical records. She went through them during this

appointment and said that I would need to see a hepatologist. She was shocked that no other medical professional had mentioned this before.

48. The doctor referred me onto a hepatologist nurse at Eastbourne General Hospital and during the appointment she went through my eating habits and lifestyle choices. The nurse explained that for the time being the hospital would monitor the viruses, as the viral load of HBV is only on the borderline of when they treat and the HCV viral load has consistently gone down over time. I often wonder whether this is to do with the fact that I take supplements every day.
49. I have never had a liver biopsy, but I have had a fibroscan, which shows that my liver is in a pretty good condition. The hepatologist nurse could not find any cirrhosis, but she explained that the condition of the liver can change suddenly.
50. The hospital is monitoring the viral load of both HBV and HCV and my next appointment is 11 December 2019. I will inform the Inquiry of any update to my condition.
51. My energy levels are very low and have been for as long as I can remember. I constantly feel tired and realise I do not have the same amount of energy as other people my age.
52. I have a specific round at the Royal Mail because I cannot cope with heavy rounds. I do love my job, but I do not have the same level of energy as my colleagues and lifting heavy items does take its toll on me.
53. When I get home from work, I am so tired that I have to go and lie down for a while. I could 'sleep for England', but I am good at getting up in the morning to get ready for work. I'm up at 0430.



54. I experience what I call 'hormone brain' – a brain fog and I have always put this down to the cancer and being hormonal rather than as a result of the hepatitis.
55. I do occasionally have twinges of pain in my stomach and I do often experience acid reflux, which I think could be due to problems with my gall bladder. I have mentioned this to my doctor.
56. I have always eaten well and maintain a good diet, I only drink on occasions.
57. After the Hodgkin's disease I struggled to put on muscle mass, so I took up bodybuilding. I go to the gym on a regular basis and have done so since the 1980s to maintain a certain level of fitness.
58. I had a fall in 2012 and I hit my head on a raised drain cover. I went to Hurstwood Park Hospital because I had fractured my skull.
59. The radiotherapy has affected my whole life and has caused more health issues than the hepatitis.
60. The radiotherapy has made my bones very weak. I have not been diagnosed with osteoporosis, but there is definitely some degeneration. I have also experienced muscle wastage because of the radiotherapy and therefore I have a very weak upper body. I have had some muscle removed from my back, this was done during the reconstructive operation I had.
61. Once my spleen was removed, the doctors wanted me to take antibiotics for the rest of my life. I refused and opted to take other supplements instead.
62. I strongly believe that the supplements I take daily have helped with the hepatitis infections. I take a multi vitamin tablet, collagen supplements,

bone supplements, apple cider vinegar and artichoke for my liver. They are not cheap to purchase and every 3 months I spend in the region of £50-£60 on these supplements.

63. I did feel bitter about my health when I was younger and I would question 'why me?'
64. After I was initially diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease I had to put my son into social care. My partner at the time was not up to looking after him – he was not my son's biological father but he was with me when I was diagnosed with cancer. I felt that this was the best choice for him and his well being.
65. Once in remission, my aim was to get my son back out of foster care. I had a terrible fight with the council to bring him home because they wanted to ensure I was well enough to look after him.
66. A friend of mine told me that I needed to make myself homeless, in order to receive a council property quickly, so I moved in with her short term.
67. I eventually received a flat from the local council, but I was on benefits and struggling financially. As previously mentioned I took in a lodger for extra money.
68. My son stayed with me for 3 years, but I did not like the council estate we were living in. I used to baby sit for a little girl that lived opposite and one day her father came to pick her up and stayed for a cup of tea. About an hour after he left, his wife came round with a knife and threatened to stab me. My son witnessed this incident.
69. I felt that my son was better off in foster care – his foster parents had other children and lived in the countryside. They could provide him with an upbringing that I couldn't, as a young, unwell, single mother. We came to

an arrangement that I would have him every couple of weeks to maintain regular contact.

70. My son lives close to me now and we have a good relationship.
71. I have always been open and have never covered up the fact that I have HBV or HCV, because I think it is important that people know.
72. I told my dentist about my infection with HBV and HCV, but I never received any prejudice or difference in treatment. He does wear gloves during the appointment, but I believe this is standard practice.
73. I have always been naively honest about my health with prospective employers and as a result I had a terrible time finding employment when I was young. I would declare that I had cancer and hepatitis on the medical history section of job application forms. Being turned down for jobs because of my health knocked my confidence and I am still not a very confident person.
74. I was open with my partner Phil that I have HBV and HCV and he is very understanding, but I had a bad reaction from a previous partner. After that experience I decided to be on my own and I was single for 12 years because of what happened. He felt that it was my own fault for being infected and he would often put me down because of the hepatitis.
75. Being infected with hepatitis has meant that I am reserved about whom I get involved with.
76. My partner has witnessed other people's attitudes towards me and their view is very different to the reality of how I am. He has noticed a viewpoint towards me that is not justified.

- 77. I have always adopted an alternative lifestyle and am into the arts, so I have always been looked upon as different to other people, without adding the hepatitis into the mix.
- 78. I have only just told my colleagues at work that I have HBV and HCV because I did not want to give them any ammunition.
- 79. I used to be a first aider at work but since finding out about the hepatitis I have been stopped from continuing this role.
- 80. I have also been refused life insurance; I have also been refused mortgages due to the Hepatitis. This was back in the 1990's, I cannot remember the company.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

- 81. I was never offering any counselling or psychological support in relation to my infection with HBV and HCV.
- 82. I am the type of person who accepts what I have been dealt with and get on with life. I feel that this attitude comes from the upset I experienced as a child.
- 83. I did have an incident at the Royal Marsden because one of the consultants was very rude to me over the hepatitis. His attitude was that I should have been more careful. I felt that he was wrongly labelling me and putting me in a box. I was in tears on the train home. I do not recall his name, but he was Arabic and later moved to a hospital in Scotland.
- 84. I feel that medical professionals have looked after me after reasonably well, but I no longer trust doctors to make the correct diagnosis. When I have a problem I tend to try and self diagnose before I see the Doctor.

85. I was prescribed anti-depressants in the early 1980's. This was due to the cancer and the hepatitis; I only took them for about 6 months as they didn't really work for me.

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

86. No medical profession ever pointed me in the direction of compensation or mentioned about financial support. As a result I have never applied for any financial assistance.

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

87. The hepatologist nurse at Eastbourne General Hospital recommended that I got in touch with the Infected Blood Inquiry; she also mentioned the compensation schemes. Since being in touch with the Infected Blood Inquiry I will make enquires to see if I am eligible for EIBSS.
88. With reference to the Inquiry, I would like to see that for the future, nothing like this happens again. Learning needs to be identified in order that this sort of thing never repeats itself. I certainly believe that there should be better communication between the medical profession and their patients.

#### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

6 / 11 / 19