

Witness Name: Mrs R K Dhaliwal

Statement No: WITN2743001

Exhibits: 0

Dated 3 April 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF RESHAM KAUR DHALIWAL

I, Resham Kaur Dhaliwal will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Resham Kaur Dhaliwal. I was born on the [GRO-C] 1955 and live at [GRO-C] Berkshire, [GRO-C]. My husband passed away in 1986 and I live with my two adult sons. I am retired, due to ill health.
2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How infected

3. In 1989, I returned from a trip to Canada with my mother-in-law and felt very weak, due to losing a lot of blood from my menstrual periods whilst away. As soon as we returned, my mother-in-law and sister-in-law took me to Wrexham Park Hospital, where I stayed for two nights. I cannot recall much about this stay, but I know that I received a blood transfusion. This is the only occasion that I have received any blood products.

4. I was not asked anything before I received the blood, and I was not warned that there was a risk of contracting an infection.
5. In or around 1993, my health began to worsen and I regularly visited our local doctor. At one stage, I was attending the doctor's surgery every other week. The doctors did not know what was wrong with me, so prescribed medication that did not help.
6. One day, my eyes were yellow and my friend advised me to have a full health test, including a liver check up. These blood tests were undertaken and the results came back confirming that I had contracted Hepatitis C. The GP did not provide any advice or information, but merely told me that nothing could be done to help me and then made me an appointment with a hospital in Maidenhead.
7. At the hospital in Maidenhead, I was advised that I had developed cirrhosis. I was then referred to a specialist at the Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, where I am still treated today. At the Royal Free Hospital, Professor Moore finally explained to us what the infection was and provided us with information to manage and understand it. I was given booklets on the risk of transmission and my children were advised to get tested. Fortunately, the results showed that they had not contracted HCV.
8. Although the Royal Free explained everything thoroughly and provided support, I believe the infection should have been diagnosed many years earlier and that my GP should have provided me with this information and Wrexham Park Hospital should have had information regarding the blood transfusion.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. I am unaware of any other infections that I may have contracted as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.

Section 4. Consent

10. During the 1990s, I attended the GP on a regular basis and had a lot of blood tests. I was informed that I was being tested for everything, but I was not informed that I had contracted Hepatitis C.

Section 5. Impact

11. Around three or four years after receiving the blood transfusion, I began to feel unwell. My head did not feel right and I felt very sick and dizzy. It felt like I had a hangover all the time. I also suffered with a lot of bleeding from my gums and suffered with a lot of issues with my teeth.

12. I was not able to do much and constantly felt very tired. My eyes felt very dark and I had a glare in front of them. I was unable to do everyday activities that I had previously done with ease, for instance if I tried to do the cooking I would have to stop and sit down because I did not have the energy for it.

13. The doctors did not know what was wrong with me, so for many years I was prescribed medication that was not what I needed. I recall coming home and telling my children that the doctors did not know what was wrong with me.

14. I felt very tired, depressed and did not have the energy to do anything. At the time, I found it very frustrating that the doctors did not know what was wrong with me and could not help. I believe I have been mentally scarred from this experience.

15. When I was finally diagnosed, we were advised that my liver was too damaged. The specialist advised that, although I could begin treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin there was no guarantee that it would work. We were informed that I needed a liver transplant and I was put on a donor list. My son was adamant that we should try the medication, due to the risks of operating on someone my age. I began treatment whilst we waited for a donor liver to become available.

16. When I began treatment, we were not aware how much it would affect me. I believe it accelerated the effects of my Hepatitis C. The tumour in my stomach continued to grow and it popped out to look as though I was carrying two babies.
17. I had terrible side effects from Interferon and Ribavirin. I would have the injection in my stomach every Wednesday and by that evening I felt completely out of it. I was bed bound; for the following few days I did not feel right and was unable to do anything. By the time I started to feel better at the end of the week, it would be time to have the injection again. I also suffered from diarrhoea.
18. My treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin was unsuccessful and I have not been offered any new treatment that could cure my Hepatitis C. As a result of my infection, I have a tumour in my new liver.
19. I also suffer from water retention in my stomach, which may be attributable to the medication that I am required to take on a daily basis. I take medication for water retention, but I recently had a terrible experience with this. I was kept on the medication for too long, which caused my kidneys to have too much sodium in them.
20. After my second operation to remove the latest tumour, I was put in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital and I was in an induced coma for a week. I was informed I had been sedated because when they tried to wake me up my heart rate was double what it should be.
21. I have also recently been advised to undergo chemotherapy because the cancer keeps returning and there are small tumours that come back.
22. I take five tablets every morning and four in the afternoon, these include: Advagraf; Mycohpeholate motefil; Amlodipine; Metoprolol and Paracetamol. I am so used to taking these that I do not feel any effects from them.
23. Having heard about the treatment that is available to others, I would consider that other treatment for HCV should have been made available to me. Around

three years ago, my son told the staff at the Royal Free Hospital that he had heard about a drug that can cure HCV. He was told that this was not the case and if there were then it would be on trial.

24. My infection has had a significant impact on my family and private life. I also no longer have a social life. I used to regularly go to restaurants and walks in the park with my family, but I no longer can do these simple things. I used to go on holiday and shopping, but I cannot do this anymore because I do not have the energy. I am unable to visit my relatives in Canada, so I only see them when they come to the UK. I am also unable to travel to India to see relatives. My cousins live in Leeds and Bradford, and I used to visit them often. Now everything is too difficult and I cannot do it anymore.

25. After my second operation, two of my sisters-in-law each came to stay with me for a month to look after me as I was bed bound. This was the last time I saw them.

26. All of my family are aware of my infection, as they know what I have been through. However, other than close family, close friends and medical professionals, I do not tell anyone about my infection with Hepatitis C.

27. My infection has undoubtedly had an impact on mine and the family financial situation. Due to the extent of the side effects I suffered from my treatment with HCV, I had to stop working and rely on benefits. The amount I have received in benefits is not as much as I received when I was working, so it has been challenging surviving on a lower income. I have faced difficulties paying the bills and mortgage, and I was required to give up my car because I was physically unable to drive, and could not afford to keep it.

28. My son Gurpreet is my primary carer and regularly has to take me to the Royal Free Hospital for treatment. I am aware that caring for me has had a significant impact on his ability to work and there is a financial strain on both of my children to look after me.

29. Due to my infection, the price of travel insurance is very high. It costs between £4,500 – £6,000 to obtain insurance, and it is not worth the risk of travelling

without any. As such, I have been unable to go on holiday. I have wanted to go back to India for years, but the high cost of Travel Insurance prevents me from doing so.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

30. The Royal Free Hospital has been very supportive. However, I have not been offered any counselling or emotional support in relation to my Hepatitis C.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

31. I have not received any financial assistance from the trusts or funds, despite my infection with HCV. However, I became aware of the Skipton Fund from the Royal Free Hospital and applied for financial assistance. I have applied for assistance more than twenty times, but have repeatedly been refused and advised that I must provide proof of my blood transfusion. I found the application process unnecessarily difficult and they were not very helpful, as I did not have the evidence that they required.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

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

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-C.....

Dated..... 03/04/19.....