

Witness Name: Mr G S Dhaliwal

Statement No: WITN2744001

Exhibits: WITN2744002

Dated: 3 April 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GURPREET SINGH DHALIWAL

I, Gurpreet Singh Dhaliwal will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Gurpreet Singh Dhaliwal. I was born on the GRO-C 1980 and live at GRO-C Berkshire, GRO-C with my mother, who has retired due to ill health, and my younger brother. My father passed away in 1986.
2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my mother's full medical records.
3. I make this statement as the son of, Resham Kaur Dhaliwal who was infected with Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion.

Section 2. How Affected

4. In 1989, my mother returned from a trip to Canada with my grandmother and felt very weak, due to losing a lot of blood through heavy menstrual periods whilst away. As soon my mother returned from Canada, my grandmother and aunt took her to Wrexham Park Hospital, where she stayed for two nights.

She cannot recall much about this stay, but we know that she received a blood transfusion. This is the only occasion that she has ever received any blood products.

5. I understand my mother was not asked anything before she received the blood, and was not warned that there was a risk of contracting an infection.
6. In or around 1993, my mother's health began to worsen and she regularly visited our local doctor. At one stage, she was attending the doctor's surgery every other week. The doctors did not know what was wrong with her, so prescribed medication that did not help.
7. One day, my mother's eyes were yellow and her friend advised her to get a full health test, including a liver check up. These blood tests were undertaken and the results came back to state that she had contracted Hepatitis C. The GP did not provide any advice or information, but merely told her that nothing could be done to help her.
8. I asked the GP about the infection and he said "it is going to stay in her blood forever. There is nothing that can be done about it... there is no treatment." He then repeated this for my mother in our language Gujarati and said he will refer her to a hospital in Maidenhead.
9. At the hospital in Maidenhead, we were advised that my mother had developed cirrhosis. She was then referred to a specialist at the Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, where she is 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. We were given booklets on the risk of transmission and my brother and I were advised to get tested. Fortunately, the results showed that we had not contracted HCV.
10. Although the Royal Free explained everything thoroughly and provided support, I believe the infection should have been diagnosed many years

earlier and that my mother's GP should have provided her with this information.

Section 3. Other Infections

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

Section 4. Consent

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

Section 5. Impact

13. Around three or four years after receiving the blood transfusion, my mother began to feel unwell. Her head did not feel right and she felt very sick and dizzy. It was as though she had a hangover all the time. She also suffered with a lot of bleeding from her gums and suffered with a lot of issues with her teeth.

14. My mother was not able to do much and constantly felt very tired. Her eyes were very sensitive and had a glare in front of them. She was unable to do everyday activities that she had previously done with ease, for instance if she tried to do the cooking she would have to stop and sit down because she could not continue.

15. The doctors did not know what was wrong with her, so for many years she was prescribed medication that was not what she needed. I recall her coming home and telling us that the doctors did not know what was wrong with her.

16. She became very tired, depressed and did not have the energy to do anything. I believe she has been mentally scarred from this experience. To

this day, if we tell our mother to go to the park or try to take her out, she gets tired after about 200 yards and needs to take a break. If we take her out for the day, she is basically bed bound the next day.

17. My mother's moods were also affected by her infection and I recall her always being mad when I was a teenager. She was very angry and aggressive all the time. Her infection caused her to become very moody and it is not always easy to deal with her. When I was a teenager this was even more difficult, so I would regularly cycle to my grandparents house three miles away. Due to her infection, my mother has not really been able to look after my brother and I and our grandad, uncles and aunts have had to raise my brother and I.
18. When she was finally diagnosed, we were advised that her liver was too damaged. The specialist advised that, although she could begin treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin there was no guarantee that it would work. We were informed that she needed a liver transplant and she was put on a donor list. I was adamant that we should try the medication, due to the risks of operating on someone her age. She began treatment whilst we waited for a donor liver to become available.
19. When she began treatment, we were not aware how much it would affect her. I believe it accelerated the effects of her Hepatitis C. The tumour in her stomach continued to grow and it popped out to look as though she was carrying two babies.
20. My mother suffered terrible side effects from Interferon and Ribavirin. She would have the injection in her stomach every Wednesday and by that evening she felt completely out of it. She was bed bound; for the following few days and was unable to do anything. By the time she started to feel better at the end of the week, it would be time to have the injection again. She also suffered from diarrhoea.
21. Her treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin was unsuccessful and she has not been offered any new treatment that could cure her Hepatitis C.

22. As a result of her infection, she has a tumour in her new liver and she had one in her previous liver as well.
23. My mother also suffers from water retention in her stomach, which may be attributable to the medication that she was required to take on a daily basis. She takes medication for water retention, but recently had a terrible experience with this. She was kept on the medication for too long, which caused her kidneys to have too much sodium in them.
24. After her second operation to remove the latest tumour, she was put in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital and was in an induced coma for a week. She required sedation because when they tried to wake her up her heart rate was double that which it should be.
25. She has also recently been advised to undergo chemotherapy because the cancer keeps returning and there are small tumours that come back.
26. My mother takes five tablets every morning and four in the afternoon, these include: Advagraf; Mycohpeholate motefil; Amlodipine; Metoprolol and Paracetamol. She is so used to taking these that she does not feel any effects from them.
27. Having heard about the treatment that is available to others, I consider that other treatment for HCV should have been made available to my mother. Around three years ago, I told the staff at the Royal Free Hospital that I had heard about a drug that can cure HCV. I was told that this was not the case and if there were then it would be on trial.
28. My mother's infection has had a significant impact on our family and private life, as she no longer has a social life. We used to go regularly to restaurants and for a walk in the park with her, but can no longer do this. We used to go on holidays and go shopping, but we cannot do this anymore because my mother does not have the energy. She is unable to visit our relatives in Canada, so we only see them when they come to the UK. She is also unable to travel to India to see relatives. Her cousins live in Leeds and Bradford, and

she used to visit them often. Now everything is too difficult and my mother cannot do it anymore.

29. After her second operation, two of her sisters-in-law each came to stay with us for a month to look after my mother as she was bed bound. This is the last time she saw them.

30. My mother's infection has undoubtedly had an impact on her financial situation. She used to work at a factory that produced bathroom fans, where she had a nice community of friends. After this, she worked as a cleaner but we could see that she was unwell and something was not right. Due to the extent of the side effects she suffered from her treatment for HCV, she had to stop working and rely on benefits. I know that she would rather be out working, but has not got the energy anymore.

31. The amount she has received in benefits is not as much as she received when she was working, so it has been challenging surviving on a lower income. My mother has faced difficulties paying the bills and mortgage, and was required to give up her car because she was physically unable to drive and could not afford to keep it.

32. As her eldest son, I am my mother's primary carer. My relationship with my mother has been strained due to her infection. It made her very angry and sometimes aggressive, which I clearly recall from my teenage years. Although we now know that this was due to her HCV. At the time we relied on our relatives who had to step up and raise us.

33. I regularly take her to the Royal Free Hospital for treatment and we have to do most things for her at home. Due to her lack of energy and tiredness, we take her food and tea in bed because sometimes she feels unable to get out of bed. I always have to keep an eye on her in the middle of the night and check to see if she is okay. I have become quite paranoid and constantly worry that she is alright.

34. This worry began during my school years, when I knew at the back of my mind that something was wrong. Due to these concerns I did not focus on my

studies, as I had already lost my father and was worried about my mother. This mental strain put me off attending university for some time because I was unable to deal with everything. I later obtained a BA in Music Technology, but I can no longer do anything with this degree because I am her full-time carer. Caring for my mother has prevented me progressing in my career in the way that I could have.

35. In particular, being a full-time carer has had a significant impact on my ability to work and there is a financial strain on myself and my brother to look after her. I am a DJ and used to regularly work most weekends doing events. However, I am now a full-time carer so I am unable to do this. Unfortunately, we do not get a carer's allowance because they say that she is too fit and healthy to qualify for this.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

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

37. My brother and I were offered counselling when we were going through the process of being considered for live donors for my mother's liver transplant. The counsellor explained everything thoroughly and advised me how I would feel after the surgery. He informed me that further counselling was available for me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

38. My mother has not received any financial assistance from the trusts or funds, despite her infection with HCV. However, we became aware of the Skipton Fund from the Royal Free Hospital and applied for financial assistance. We have applied for assistance more than twenty times, but have repeatedly been refused and advised that we must provide proof of her blood transfusion. We

found the application process unnecessarily difficult and they were not very helpful, as we did not have the evidence that they required.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

39. 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. I would also like to provide oral evidence in the Inquiry.

40. As my mother cannot read English well, I have read her statement to her in Gujarati and she has confirmed that she understands and agrees the statement. I refer to Exhibit WITN2744002 which is a copy of the draft unsigned statement.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated..... 03/04/19