

Witness Name: Steven Peach

Statement No: WITN3630001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF STEVEN PEACH

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I, STEVEN PEACH will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Steven Peach of GRO-C  
GRO-C My date of birth is GRO-C 1959. I am currently employed as a chemical construction project manager. My wife and I have been married for 36 years. We have two children aged 32 and 27. One of my children lives in the USA and the other in Australia.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late mother, Maureen Peach, who was born on GRO-C 1937 and who passed away on 18 November 1990, aged 53 from sepsis, following two failed liver transplants. She was infected with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) as a result of receiving a blood transfusion.
3. I am aware that my sister Susan Dawson (WITN3397001) and my brother Jeffrey Peach (WITN3581001) have provided statements. My sisters Janice Hedges and Diane Smith will also be giving statements. Our brother David Peach sadly passed away on 18 May 2016 from Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. My mother had six children and I am her second oldest child.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother's full medical records.

## **Section 2. How infected**

5. My mother was infected with HCV from a blood transfusion that she was given after my brother, Jeffrey Peach, was born, on 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. I was twelve when Jeffrey was born. At the time I did not know she had a transfusion and only knew that she had been in hospital for a while.
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 contaminated blood.
8. I knew my mother had problems with her liver but I was not aware that she had HCV until after her death. My older sister Susan found out about the infection and shared the information with the rest of us. She told me that my mother was infected through receiving a blood transfusion when Jeffrey was born.
9. If my mother received any information or advice regarding her infection, it was never brought to my attention.

## **Section 3. Other Infections**

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

## **Section 4. Consent**

11. I do not know if my mother was tested or treated without her knowledge or consent. I do not think my mother would have been aware of any risks from the blood transfusion. During that time patients did not question the hospital.

Back then you had trust in the doctors and you received any treatment they recommended.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

12. I was born in Hull and brought up in a family where my father was always out at sea and my mother stayed at home to care for me and my siblings. I have very fond memories of my childhood as we grew up in a great fishing industry community. The docks were a massive industry in Hull and provided lots of jobs to the locals at the time.
13. My father died in 1974 when my youngest brother was 2 or 3 years old.
14. My mother was very dedicated to her children and sacrificed so much for us. Despite the absence of our father, she would take us for days out to the country or the seaside and I don't ever recall a time where there was no food on the table. We all received adequate clothing and schooling and my mother ensured that we were all well looked after. I believe that the way we were raised is why we have all grown up with good mannerisms and personalities.
15. I first noticed the decline in my mother's health in or around 1988. My wife Linda and I, our son and both our mothers were on holiday together in Northumberland. In photographs from that holiday, my mother is always sitting down whereas Linda's mother is standing. Linda's mother looked fit and healthy but my mother looked poorly and you could see the yellowness in her face. My mother's natural pigmentation had always been white and pale, but despite the weather being wet and windy, my mother looked dark skinned. She also had no energy to walk around the beach. If my son wanted to be lifted by her, she was unable to withstand his weight. My son was about eighteen months old at the time.
16. Around 1988 my mother collapsed at home. We took her to Hull Royal Infirmary (HRI) and she was diagnosed with gallbladder problems. She was discharged without receiving any treatment and collapsed again. I took her back to the HRI and they operated to remove her gallbladder. At that stage

they must have known something was wrong with her liver but nothing was ever diagnosed.

17. From then on, my mother's health was poor. Her face and eyes were very yellow. She lost her appetite. It did not help that her teeth started to rot and fall out. She had no energy. It was not nice for a woman in her late forties to be in this condition.
18. The doctor told me that my mother had "ladies problems." I was not privy to any information being discussed between the doctors and my mother. My role was to take my mother to where she needed to be and provide moral support. I highly doubt that my mother knew she had HCV but if she did she didn't tell me.
19. Following my mother's discharge there was a gap of about one year until she collapsed again. Once again, I took her to HRI and only then was she diagnosed with liver damage. HRI transferred her to a hospital in Leeds where she was tested and given six weeks to live.
20. This was terrible to hear, as my mother was only 53 and was still caring for Jeffrey, her youngest child, who was still a teenager. Not to mention she had grandchildren whom she never had the chance to develop meaningful and life lasting memories with.
21. Nothing was said about why the liver disease occurred. All they said was that her liver was completely damaged. When she had her gallbladder problems examined nothing was mentioned about the liver.
22. My mother was admitted into St James' Hospital immediately and at that stage, only six high dependency beds were available. She had to wait for a patient to die to get one of the beds. She was put on the emergency transplant list for Europe as she was in such ill health and there was very little time to act. It was imperative that my mother received a liver transplant.

23. Thereafter she underwent a liver transplant. I remember it being a long operation. The new liver failed and my mother went into a coma for a while. We were told that a second transplant was needed.
24. During the months my mother spent in hospital, I was told by the hospital on three or four occasions to gather the family round as she would not last the night. Each time she overcame this prognosis and survived. My mother was a fighter even when she spent ages unconscious.
25. Three days before she died my mother started to experience fits and convulsions. By this time there was nothing they could do and on 18 November 1990, she passed away from sepsis.
26. In general, my mother's social life revolved around her children and her home life that was disrupted by her health conditions. I saw my mother's energy gradually began to deplete. When I visited, she was always sitting down and was not herself anymore. As a result, we frequently helped her out around the house with cleaning and cooking, and did her shopping on her behalf. She was only in her forties then and should have been in her prime, not spending her day on the sofa.
27. My mother was unable to fully enjoy spending time with her grandchildren. Before her death, I believe that she would have had three grandchildren: Susan's eldest daughter, David's eldest daughter and my eldest son.
28. My mother couldn't bear to have my son in her arms and it was sad to see her straining herself to try. I currently have two grandchildren and I understand the joy of being a grandparent which my mother was unable to appreciate due to her health. I know she would have made a wonderful grandparent to my children and to my nephews and nieces because she was such a wonderful and loving mother to the six of us.
29. It is also a shame that our grandchildren missed out on the opportunity to meet their grandmother. My son has very few memories of my mother as he was very young when she passed away

30. In addition to this, every time we went away for weekend, my mother was never willing to accompany us. It was a shame that she never travelled and enjoyed the sun.
31. Whilst my mother was in hospital for the final months of her life, I travelled to Leeds almost everyday. I would go to work at 6am in the morning and leave at 1pm or 2pm in the afternoon to go visit my mother. I spent months doing this. I sat by her hospital bed and held her hand just talking to her, even though she often did not know I was there. My siblings were the same. She spent many months in hospital and never had the chance to come home. Instead, she returned in a coffin.
32. My mother knew she was going to die. She wrote a note to me and Susan stating that there was a bit of money stored for paying off bills and requesting us to take care of each other.
33. Throughout her illness my mother never complained and got on with things as much as she could.
34. My mother's illness and death was a horrible and very upsetting part of all of our lives and I remember everything vividly down to the details of the songs I heard while driving on the motorway to the hospital and the names of the members of staff at the hospital.
35. I could not understand why my mother had liver issues as she never drank or smoked or ate processed food. Not to mention, she was able to raise six children. It was at the back of my mind that my grandparents smoked, but they still outlived my mother by over twenty years. Nothing can bring my mother back so, reluctantly, as unfair as it was, I accepted that this was the card we had been dealt in life.
36. The loss of our mother hit everyone hard. She meant a lot to us. I am so grateful that I had my siblings through the hard times and that even today, we are all incredibly close. We still think of our mother often. Every year, on 18

November, the anniversary of her death, we all gather at Withernsea beach where we spent many childhood holidays and where her ashes were scattered.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

37. No member of my family was offered counselling or psychological support in consequence of what happened.

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

38. No member of my family ever received any financial assistance as a result of my mother's infections. We paid for the funeral costs ourselves.

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

39. What I would like the Inquiry to answer is who knew about this operation of importing contaminated blood and who authorised it? Somebody knew exactly what they were doing and despite the risks involved, they chose to proceed anyway. As a result, people like my mother became the victims. Who sanctioned all of this?

40. The issue surrounding contaminated blood has now come to light, however it is too late and many of those infected are gone. Nothing this Inquiry achieves will ever bring my mother back, but at the very least, we deserve answers. Who approved this and, to date, why has nobody been held accountable? Time is of the essence as those responsible must either be dead or retired and enjoying out the remainder of their lives.

41. Whatever they gave to my mother in that blood transfusion caused her severe illness. I wouldn't wish what happened to my mother on anybody.

#### **Anonymity**

42. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

43. I am willing 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

26<sup>th</sup> September 2019