

Witness Name: Jennifer Anne Mitchell

Statement No: WITN3258001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JENNIFER ANNE MITCHELL

I, Jennifer Anne Mitchell will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Jennifer Anne Mitchell. I was born on the GRO-C 1956. I live at GRO-C Essex GRO-C.
2. I write this statement in relation to my son, Christopher Stephen Mitchell, born on the GRO-C 1976. Christopher has also provided a witness statement to the Inquiry, 'WITN1401001'.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my son's full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. I wish to rely on part of Christopher's statement in relation to this section.
5. Christopher was diagnosed with mild/moderate Haemophilia A in 1977 at Great Ormond Street as there was a family history of haemophilia.

6. I believe that Christopher was first given Cutter FVIII (Koate) in 1977 at Great Ormond Street when he fell and injured his lip. Further information as to what treatment Christopher received is detailed in his witness statement.
7. Christopher also received Factor FVIII (FVIII) at Southend Hospital and The Royal London Hospital (TRLH). Unfortunately, I do not recall the names of the treating doctors that administered the FVIII.
8. Christopher's medical records show that he was also given FVIII at Derby Hospital, The Royal Free Hospital and Oxford Hospital. However, I do not recall going to the above hospital for Christopher's treatment.
9. I was not provided with any information from any of the doctors at the above hospitals beforehand about the risk of Christopher being exposed to infection when using FVIII.
10. As a result of being given FVIII, Christopher was infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C). I was not given any information from any of the doctors as to when or where Christopher was infected. However, having looked through his medical records, it appears possible that he was infected with Hep C when he was given FVIII at Great Ormond Street.
11. In February 1992 I attended a routine appointment with Christopher at TRLH. We were both told by Dr Colvin that Christopher had been infected with Hep C in the past.
12. I do not recall that any information was provided in relation to the infection at the time. He just said that it was "as expected" and "it was nothing to worry about", it was played down by Dr Colvin. No adequate information was provided to us to help us understand and manage the infection.
13. I believe that information about the infection should have been provided to us sooner. I do not understand why we were not informed sooner. I believe we should have been told soon after Christopher had been infected with Hep C, not 14 years later. The doctors took blood from Christopher on a regular basis and we had to attend the hospital every six months for routine check-

ups. I thought that the routine check-ups were because of Christopher's haemophilia, however, I now believe that his regular check-ups at the hospital were because the doctors knew that he had been infected with Hep C.

14. I trusted Dr Colvin and trusted what he said that "it was nothing to worry about". However, as stated above, I believe that it was all played down, and he made us think that it was not important.

15. It was not until 1996/1997 when I was at work that a colleague handed me the Evening Standard to read in my break. When I started reading it I was absolutely shocked and tearful as to what I was reading about the link between haemophiliacs and Hep C and how serious it was. That was the first time that I realised that Hep C was something to worry about, unlike what Dr Colvin had said. I read that people were dying because of the infection. I left work early as my boss saw that I was upset, but he didn't know why. When I got home, I called the Haemophilia Society and asked them if what I had read was true, they confirmed it was.

16. In relation to the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection, I recall Dr Colvin stated that no one should use Christopher's toothbrush and sometime later, we were told not to let anyone use his razor. As a family we were not asked to be tested for Hep C.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. I recall Christopher receiving a letter stating that he falls into a group of patients who should take care to reduce the risk of further transmission of vCJD. When he opened the letter that morning he threw it on the floor and walked out of the house. I recall Christopher being very angry that day.

Section 4. Consent

18. I wish to rely on part of Christopher's witness statement in relation to this statement.

19. Christopher and I had no knowledge that he was being tested for Hep C.

20. In 1985 Christopher was tested for HTLV III (HIV) because of the anxieties of other parents at his school which I consented too, but I was not happy about it. I am not sure how the parents at the school came to know that Christopher had haemophilia, because we kept it quiet as at that time people who had knowledge of haemophilia associated it with 'AIDS', because of the way the media portrayed it and because there was a stigma attached to it.

21. Whenever Christopher was treated, I was never given any information regarding FVIII or the consequences of the treatment.

Section 5. Impact

22. I have noticed a complete change in Christopher's personality from the day that he was told that he was infected with Hep C. He was very frightened about what Dr Colvin had said. He stopped going out with his friends and he became very reclusive. He was very depressed as a result. I spend many hours talking to him on many occasions, but it does not make a difference. He had very high anxiety and he was very angry because he thought that he was going to the hospital to treat his haemophilia, but instead he was infected with Hep C.

23. I believe Christopher has suffered further medical complications as a result of the infection. He suffers from severe fatigue, anxiety, depression, stress related eczema, insomnia and he is angry with everything that has happened. He also has a lack of concentration and he is very forgetful. He doesn't even have a social life anymore.

24. Whoever administered the untreated FVIII has absolutely ruined his life. It's not only the present anxiety that affects him, it's the anxiety and the fear for what the future holds for him. He has never looked at his future as he says "what's the point".

25. Christopher has had no treatment for the Hep C apart from a scan in or about 2012. However, the treatment that is available, I consider should be looked at as I have read that there are many side effects to it.

26. I remember on one occasion when Christopher was hospitalised at the Southend University Hospital for an inner ear injury. It was at a weekend and they shut the ward he was in, and turned the lights off because they could not find anyone to administer the FVIII they said he needed. He waited for a long time for someone to come, they didn't so he discharged himself.
27. Christopher has always kept quiet about the Hep C and his haemophilia, as people did not understand and there was and there still is a stigma attached to it. I have watched Christopher deteriorate from being a healthy baby to a struggling young man with everything that comes with Hep C. On one hand he feels lucky that he did not contract HIV but he feels angry that Hep C has ruined his life in the respect that he has suffered from depression/anxiety for many years. He couldn't concentrate at school and therefore stopped trying. He does keep saying to himself what he could have achieved had he not been infected. He has never had a long term relationship and I believe this has resulted from the infection.
28. As stated above, he suffers from depression and therefore takes anti-depressants. He also takes sleeping tablets as he finds sleeping difficult. On occasions his hands are so bad he can't use them and they get infected easily. His social life is non-existent, people start asking questions and he doesn't like to tell them why.
29. He is unable to work due to the fatigue, tiredness, depression and anxiety that he suffers and as a result it has caused financial problems, which I have tried to help with in the past. It takes your self-esteem away, a feeling of being inadequate.
30. I blame myself for what has happened to Christopher. I should have been more aware as to what was going on. I was naïve and stupid. I trusted the doctors and the medication they were giving him. I would have never allowed Christopher to be given anything that was going to hurt him. All my life I have blamed myself and my mother has blamed herself for passing the haemophilia gene to me. I see what Christopher is going through and there is

nothing that I can do to for him. I will always be there for him to help and look after him.

31. As a family we have never told anyone about Christopher's haemophilia and that has been infected with Hep C. I think the reason for it is because people would not understand.

32. As I am writing this I am very emotional, there has not been a day that goes by that I don't think of my son, 'if he is ok, will he be ok'. I look at him and feel gutted, sad, that he was given Hep C. As a mother, no matter how old your children are, you would help them in every way possible, but I feel that I can't help Christopher with this.

33. I do not know if I will have any grandchildren as Christopher states 'why bring children into the world when you don't know how long you are going to be around'.

34. My son was born healthy and now it has all been taken away from him and his family and that is something that can never be replaced.

35. My daughter Karen is 4 years younger than Christopher. She always had to come to Christopher's hospital appointments as I had no childcare at the time. The impact on her now is massive and as a result she now has white coat syndrome and high anxiety, which sadly she has passed onto her children.

36. Karen has in the past attended medical appointments with Christopher and she was always asked by Dr Colvin to have blood tests, but she would decline it because it would frighten her. She tells me that she believes that the reason she was asked was because her blood group is the same as Christopher's, and she may have contracted Hep C from him. She told me that without a doubt she would help Christopher in anyway possible even if it meant that going through a liver transplant procedure for him. However, it does play on her mind so much that she has had to see a Counsellor and see a Cognitive Therapist. She found it hard in her teenage years to go out with her friends because it meant she wasn't there to look after her brother. Both Karen and Christopher have a really good relationship, so with Christopher

being infected with Hep C has had a profound effect on her. She speaks with her brother everyday to check that he is OK. She is unable to get out of her head that a hospital is where you go to get better and not a place to be given something that is going to ruin a life and a whole family.

37. Christopher felt like an outcast at school. He wasn't allowed to participate in sport activities. Each school parents evening the teachers would all say the same thing that he had, 'poor concentration level, and problem retaining information'. I think to myself what might he have achieved, if he was not infected with Hep C.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

38. No one has ever offered Christopher or myself any counselling or psychological support. It is now something that we have to live with each day.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. I wish to rely on Christopher's witness statement in relation to this section.

Section 8. Other Issues

40. I consider having a Public Inquiry is a good start to find out why and how so many people were infected, as those that were infected have lost their lives and their families have been broken as a result. For Christopher this has brought up so many bad memories and not knowing what the future holds really upsets the whole family.

41. I consider whatever Christopher might need in the future it should be forthcoming from the NHS. I do not consider that anyone should jump through hoops for help. They should realise that someone is responsible for infecting not only Christopher but many others. In May 2017, Dr Colvin said "there is no need to have another Inquiry as it would not benefit anyone". I fundamentally disagree, my family need to know why this happened. The contaminated blood scandal has ruined all our lives especially Christopher's.

42. Someone out there is accountable for what happened. No amount of money can bring back what has been taken from Christopher. The right thing needs to be done now to make sure he has no financial worries for the rest of his life.

43. As I am a haemophilia carrier and my FVIII is low, in 1999 I went into hospital for a foot operation and I can remember as if it was yesterday. Before the operation the doctor came to me and said I would need FVIII as my level was 25%. I said I did not want FVIII because of what had happened and she said that I will have to have it because of my levels.

44. In approximately 2004 I received a letter regarding vCJD, which worried me because of the Inquiry. I asked for my medical notes and it states that I had DDAVP for the foot operation, which I totally disagree as I know what I was told when I had the foot operation. I asked for my medical records from the London Hospital but I have been told that they are no longer available.

45. Who decided that it was a good thing to use untreated blood from prostitutes and drug users who were paid to donate it and originated from America? I wonder if they would have treated their own children with FVIII. Whoever is responsible needs to be held accountable for it.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

46. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

47. I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

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23-9-2019

Dated