

Witness Name: H S King  
Statement No: WITN3659001  
Exhibits: 0  
Dated: June 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF HEIKE SYBILLE KING

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I, Heike Sybille King, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Heike Sybille King and I was born on GRO-C 1961. I live at GRO-C  
GRO-C London, GRO-C I am employed by a  
school as a Business Manager.
2. I make this statement as an affected daughter of my late mother, Marlies  
Agnes Erna Phillips, who was born on GRO-C 1939 and passed  
away, aged 77, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017.
3. My mother was infected with Hepatitis C via a contaminated blood transfusion  
during one or more of the following three procedures; a thyroidectomy in  
1970, a further thyroidectomy (date unknown) and a hysterectomy in 1984.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access  
to my late mother's medical records.** My sister did try to obtain the medical  
records but was unsuccessful in this regard. I understand that she may also  
be providing a witness statement to the Inquiry.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

5. My mother was infected with Hepatitis C during surgery which she underwent during the 1970s and/or the 1980s. I refer to paragraph 3 above of my witness statement.
6. My mother underwent these procedures at either the Glangwili General Hospital, Carmarthen or at the Prince Philip Hospital in Llanelli.
7. I cannot recall exactly when but I recollect visiting my mother in hospital, with my sister, and remembering that she had some ghastly looking stitches coming out of her neck. I do not know which of the three possible procedures this was after but the image of the stitches in her neck have stuck in my mind for all of these years.
8. As far as I am aware, my mother received no warning or advice regarding the risk of infection from blood transfusions.
9. In or around 2000 my mother underwent some routine blood tests which showed that she was suffering with Pancreatitis and gall stones. Not long after this my mother suffered with a further bout of Pancreatitis which I believe led the clinicians to suspect that there was something wrong with her liver. I understand that she was then screened for Hepatitis C and told by either a consultant or registrar, in or around 2000/2001, that she had been infected with the virus. My sister, who is a nurse, accompanied my mother to this appointment.
10. I understand that my mother was offered treatment for Hepatitis C at the same appointment, but decided not to go ahead with this due to the extremely harsh side effects of the treatment regime. I believe that she was also asked if she wanted to know how she had become infected with Hepatitis C but she declined. My mother was very embarrassed about the whole situation and did not want to have to deal with the stigma attached to this virus.

11. I did not find out that my mother had Hepatitis C until after she passed away, which was upsetting for a number of reasons. Firstly, had I been furnished with this information, I believe that I would possibly have overridden my mother's views and insisted upon her having treatment in an attempt to clear this aggressive and relentless virus.
12. Secondly, I would have also avoided asking my mother questions as to why she was always complaining about her back pain during the latter stages of her life. I had no idea that she had Hepatitis C; in fact I had started to suspect that she had cancer due to her failing health and the fact that no one would discuss the same with me.
13. Thirdly, I would not have been left with difficult and frequent thoughts of how alone my mother must have felt in that her fear of embarrassment and stigma meant that she suffered in silence. It was like she was forced to live an almost "*secret life*" which was hidden from everyone except my father and my sister.
14. Finding out via my sister after my mother's passing that my mother had been infected with Hepatitis C really shocked me but I understood why she wanted to keep it a secret. The sole reason my sister was party to this information was because she was a nurse and my mother felt that it would be a good idea for her to attend the aforementioned appointment referred to in paragraphs 9 and 10 above of my witness statement.

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

15. As far as I am aware, my mother was not infected with, or exposed to, any other infections including vCJD.

### **Section 4. Consent**

16. I do not know whether my mother was tested or used for the purposes of research without her knowledge and therefore without her consent.

17. My mother was given a blood transfusion during one of three occasions without her informed consent.

### **Section 5. Impact**

18. I remember my mother being completely lethargic and exhausted but not knowing why. She also had liver disease, although I was not aware of this at the time. My mother was often in complete agony; I could clearly see the pain etched on her face. She ended up in a wheelchair pretty early on in life and I remember thinking that she must have cancer due to her many ailments, failing health and the fact that no one would discuss what was happening to her.

19. I remember taking my mother to a garden centre about six months before she passed away. Garden centres were usually places that brought much joy to my mother. However, on this occasion, the visit provided her with zero enjoyment and she showed absolutely no appreciation of being there. My mother had completely lost her zest for life by this time.

20. My mother did not disclose the existence of her infection to anyone other than my father and my sister. She was a proud woman and she did not want people to know about the Hepatitis C; I think she was well aware of the stigma which unfortunately went "*hand in hand*" with the virus.

21. In terms of support, my father was wonderful and did absolutely everything for my mother. He did not want anyone to help him, although he occasionally afforded my sister the opportunity, only by virtue of the fact that she was a nurse. I think my father tried to carry on as normal and it was like he almost pretended that nothing was seriously wrong with my mother. I think he was in denial and trying to block out the reality of what was happening to my mother. Even when we attended the hospital for the final time, I don't think my father had fully accepted that we were there to say goodbye to my mother. My mother's passing hit my father extremely hard.

22. My sister and I were also terribly upset by my mother's passing. I ended up having a bit of a mental breakdown shortly after my mother's death and I refer to paragraph 26 below of this witness statement.

23. Even today, I am still very angry about what was allowed to happen, both to my mother and to all those other people who were infected and affected by this tragedy. In fact, talking about it further fuels my anger. I also wonder what the outcome of the current Covid 19 will be and whether this will have future, and as yet, unknown wider ramifications.

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

24. I don't believe that my mother received any poor or substandard dental or medical treatment/care as a result of her Hepatitis C.

25. As far as I am aware, neither my mother nor any of our family were offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of my mother's infection and/or subsequent passing.

26. I had a bit of a mental breakdown following my mother's passing which led me to seek, source and fund my own counselling. I was absent from work for a few months while I dealt with matters and, thankfully, I am fine now.

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

27. Neither my mother nor any of our family received any financial or practical support from the Skipton Fund (SF). The EIBSS was set up after my mother's passing and I confirm that I have not received any financial or other assistance from them.

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

28. I am not sure that this Inquiry will achieve anything worthwhile. However, above all, I would like justice to prevail and for this type of tragedy to never



happen again. I want to put it out there that what happened was very wrong and I think it is important that people recognise and acknowledge what the infected and affected have gone through.

**Anonymity**

29. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I do not wish 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..... 18-06-2020 .....