

Witness Name: Janice Hedges

Statement No: WITN3685001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: June 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JANICE HEDGES

I, Janice Hedges, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Janice Hedges. I live at GRO-C
My date of birth is GRO-C 1968. I have been married for 31 years and my husband and I have one son who is now 25 years old. I have worked as an Accounts Clerk all my life. As my husband is self employed, I help him with his accounts too.
2. I make this statement in relation to my late mother, Maureen Peach, who was born on 3 March 1937 and who passed away on 18 November 1990, aged 53. She was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving a blood transfusion following the birth of my youngest brother, Jeffrey Peach.
3. I am aware that my sister, Susan Dawson, has provided her own account under Statement No. **[WITN3397001.]** I believe my brothers Jeffrey Peach and Steven Peach, along with my sister Diane Smith, will also be providing statements to the Inquiry. Our brother, David Peach sadly passed away on 18 May 2016 from Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma aged 50.

4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother's (Maureen Peach) full medical records.**

Section 2. How infected

5. On GRO-C 1971 at Hedon Road Maternity Hospital in Hull, my mother was given a blood transfusion following the birth of my younger brother, Jeffrey, my mother's sixth child. As a result of the blood transfusion she was infected with HCV. I was only three years old at the time. I am aware that Hedon Road Maternity hospital was closed for good in 2003.
6. I believe my mother needed the blood transfusion due to severe blood loss during child birth. She gave birth to myself and the rest of my siblings at home.
7. We were too young to understand what happened. My sister Susan, who was the eldest child, told us that Mother was very ill and needed an emergency transfusion. When the issue of contaminated blood came to light, Susan herself put the pieces together. Susan was also the one who informed me that my mother had been living with HCV. I only found out about all of this within the last few years.
8. I do not know if my mother knew she was infected with HCV. I therefore do not know what information or advice she may have been offered to manage the condition.
9. I do not know if any information or advice was provided to my mother beforehand, about the risks of being exposed to infection either.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I am unaware of any other infections which 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.
12. I would have thought my mother wouldn't have been aware of any risks. In those days, you just would not question the hospital. You had faith in them and put yourself in their care, under the assumption that they were doing what was best for your health.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. Following the blood transfusion in 1971, my mother's health declined considerably. During a span of at least the last 15 years of her life, her health was very poor. She was incredibly tired and looking back, she was so jaundiced. Her teeth became very rotten and started falling out. I remember when she was in hospital we would all take it in turns to visit her.
14. In 1988, my mother had her gallbladder removed. I got married that year at the age of 20 and knew nothing of the gallbladder operation until later on. In general, I knew very little about her health complications as, to a certain extent, I, alongside my younger siblings, were sheltered from the truth I guess.
15. My father died when I was only six years old and so my mother became a widow at the age of 37. As we were six siblings the age gap between Susan, the eldest, and Jeffrey, the youngest, was fifteen years. We were classed as the older three and the younger three. When my Mother health really declined, my eldest siblings Susan and Steven took on much of the responsibility and knew the most about Mum's health. I assume taking on parental roles, made them decide it was best us younger siblings did not worry ourselves with the whole truth.

16. I now understand why that was the case as I, as victim to cancer on two occasions, have done the same to my own son and shielded him from the truth initially too.
17. In 1990, my mother discussed with us all the need for a liver transplant. All I really knew was that my mother was very ill and this seemed like the final attempt to make her better. She asked us for our opinion on the matter and we all agreed that she had to try. If she didn't have it, she would have died and we didn't want to lose her. In the end she had to undergo two liver transplants, neither of which were successful.
18. It was a Sunday night when she died. I was due to go visit her on Monday after work. I had laid my clothes out in preparation the night before and can still remember the outfit I had chosen to wear. It became part of our routine that my husband drove us to her. We received a call in the middle of the night from Steven to tell us Mother had died. My husband took the phone call and without having heard the news, I just knew. Luckily I had a very supportive husband to help me during this time.
19. It just seemed so unnecessary. Her death could have been prevented had they identified the problem earlier. Had they properly tested my mother for HCV, they could have offered other treatments before allowing the virus to damage her liver, thus preventing the need for a liver transplant. My mother may still have been alive today. I feel so cheated to have lost her, especially in this way.
20. My mother lived for her children. I moved out after I married at the age of twenty and when she died, only Jeffrey remained living with her. She had downsized to a house suitable for two people.
21. There was so much my mother lost out on. She was widowed at 37 and remained single until her death. She lived purely for us. I remember all she ever wanted was to become a grandmother. Whilst she was in St James

Hospital in Leeds (where she was admitted in September 1990) awaiting her liver transplant, my husband and I took her out to meet Susan's daughter Claire, after she was born on the GRO-C 1990. My mother had her first liver transplant in early October 1990.

22. My mother must have known she was dying because she left a note requesting that one of us take Jeffery in and care for him. At the time I was only 22 years old and my husband was 24, so it was a big request but we both wanted to do it. At no point during my mother's illness did my husband complain. Not about having to drive me on long journeys to visit my mother, or having to assume responsibility for Jeffrey's care.
23. In general, you'd do anything for your Mum. I look back now and I wish I had done a lot more, but I was still very young myself. My mother was a strong lady and would have done anything for anybody. Unfortunately, I was very much shielded from what she was going through I suppose.
24. Losing my mother had a massive impact on me and my family. It was increasingly difficult when taking my age into consideration. I wish she could have been there on so many more occasions. When our son was born he was very ill and when the midwife asked if she should call my Mum, all I could think was "I wish you could." The midwife had presumed that I still had my parents around maybe because I was so young. My mother's presence and support at that moment would have been of invaluable comfort to me.
25. It would have been so comforting to have her around when I was fighting cancer myself on two separate occasions. I had skin cancer when I was 39 and womb cancer at the age of 48. When I became a parent myself, I started to realise just what a mother means to a child. It is unfair that I lost my mother and to realise that things could have been so different had she have been treated in time is heart breaking. Our Mother was everything to us.
26. When our brother David passed away on 18th May 2016 this was also devastating for the family. He passed away from Non Hodgkins Lymphoma. When I researched the matter I found it was also linked to Hepatitis C. He was

only 50 years old. I found this to be quite alarming and I wondered whether he had been infected too? What if I had been infected and in turn had infected my husband and child? I also worry whether my brothers and sisters could possibly have been infected.

27. As previously mentioned we took Jeff in as he was only 19 years old when Mother died. To this day we are really close and have a great relationship. In a way, it was nice that we all at least had each other to get through the hard times.

28. Financially, as a family we got on with it and managed the best we could. At the time I was working full time and studying at college. Eventually this dual role became too much for me and I gave up college finishing halfway through the course. I simply had no time for it.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

29. I do not believe my mother was given the correct treatment for the condition she contracted.

30. Perhaps if she had been diagnosed and treated earlier, her liver would not have deteriorated to the point that it did.

31. I feel my mother was kept in the dark about the true nature and extent of her health problems. When the damage had been done, my mother would not have questioned the health authorities and would have taken up their care. People didn't dare ask or question a doctor in those days as they do now.

32. I believe the liver transplant was given to my mother as a last resort.

33. I know my mother was given no support whatsoever in relation to her mental health. It was not offered to me either and looking back I feel we should have been offered it. We definitely would have benefitted.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. As far as I am aware our mother never received any financial assistance but considering how we lived I doubt she received anything as we did not have very much. Susan stepped up and helped as much as she could financially.

35. I received no support either personally or financially from anyone other than my husband and my siblings

36. I do not know if the rest of my family had any support, but I doubt they received anything because they would have included us all, if that was the case.

Section 8. Other Issues

37. What I would like from the Inquiry is an admission of truth. I would like those responsible to hold their hands up and admit to their mistakes. I would also like somebody to say that it was possible to have made other attempts to treat my mother in order to give her a fighting chance; instead of allowing her liver to become damaged to the extent it did and thus necessitating a liver transplant. It was wholly unnecessary for my mother to die at 53 years old.

38. I could easily say I don't want to go through all of this again 30 years later but we need justice for our mother

Anonymity

39. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

40. 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.....

16/06/2020