



Witness Name: Ian McEwan

Statement No.: WITN3764001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF IAN MCEWAN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11 November 2019.

I, Ian McEwan, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Ian McEwan. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am married to Elaine McEwan and have two adult sons.
2. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have a legal representative with me at my interview with the Inquiry Investigators on 20 November 2019 and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to take my statement
3. I intend to speak about how my life has been impacted by contracting Hepatitis C. Particularly, how I was infected and how this disease, and its treatment, affected myself and my family.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I was infected with Hepatitis C, aged 26, when I received a blood transfusion at Canniesburn Hospital following a severe hand injury outside my home.
5. I left the house with a glass lemonade bottle in hand to fill up my car radiator. On my way to the car I tripped and, instinctively, put my hand out to break my fall, smashing the bottle and cutting my hand. I didn't feel any pain but looked and saw blood spurting from the wound. Panicking, I ran inside holding my wrist in an attempt to stem the flow of blood.
6. At the time of the accident Elaine and I lived on the top floor. She was home with our first child. Worried I wouldn't make it that far, I banged on my downstairs neighbours' door. Luckily, he was in and called an ambulance. Still bleeding badly, I went upstairs to find my wife but I did not make it to the flat. When Elaine saw me, she grabbed some towels to stop the bleeding.
7. The ambulance arrived and I clearly remember the paramedic commenting on two things: the mess that I'd made in the stairway, and, that if I had lifted my hand above my head, I would not have lost so much blood.
8. I was rushed to Falkirk Hospital where they removed the glass from my arm, a painful procedure, before wrapping it up and sending me off to Glasgow Royal. By this stage, it was four or five in the morning and I was in shock. Here, after assessing my injury, they told me they needed to operate.
9. My arm began to cramp and I was put under. I woke up in Canniesburn Hospital but my memory of exactly when I woke up is not particularly clear. I do recall being told that the doctor at Canniesburn was a specialist who was able to do the fine stitching required for my hand.
10. The nurse also told me I had received a blood transfusion; I thought nothing of it at the time. My main concern was getting out of hospital and back to work. I ended up spending three to four weeks in there, I had lost so much blood.

11. Due to the urgency of the operation, I did not have the chance to consent to the transfusion, nor was I informed of any potential risk of infection. I was also in an incredible amount of pain once the adrenaline wore off.
12. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of the blood transfusion described above. I discovered this 32 years later in 2018 when I woke up extremely ill. I was orange and my stomach was so swollen it looked like I was pregnant. The pain made me double over and I could barely walk the length of myself. I was caught by how suddenly and severely the illness came on
13. I went to Larbert Hospital where I was told by the doctors I had Hepatitis C. After this they asked me if I had any tattoos, if I did any drugs or if I had a loose sex life. I almost had to laugh. I'm a happily married man and have worked on oil rigs offshore all my life so am randomly drug tested regularly. Alcoholism or drug use simply would not have been accepted in my working environment. I could sense they had seen a lot of alcoholics and I was being treated as one of them. I am not complaining about the treatment but it was still something I sensed.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I did not contract any other infections as a result of my transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

15. I do not recall being tested for Hepatitis C when I became ill last year.

Section 5. Impact

Previous ill health

16. Looking back, now I can see that I was ill but refused to acknowledge it. After a night out, I would experience horrible side effects such as strange feelings in my head. But, overall, these were minor compared to what happened in 2018.

Physical effects

17. The sickness that came on last year was the worst I have experienced in my entire life. I was so tired I could barely get out of bed and was in incredible pain

18. After my initial diagnosis in 2018, I got an infection in my stomach and had to go back to hospital where I was told I had liver cirrhosis which was so severe I may need a liver transplant. By this stage my liver was failing. I was put on tablets and things began to improve but during my treatment I had to have my stomach drained regularly; a debilitating, painful and scary procedure.

19. Four or five times I would have to wait for fluid in my stomach to build up when I would feel very ill and then go and have it drained. The doctors had to be extremely cautious not to puncture my stomach as the needle would need to go quite deep. Over this period, I lost four stone.

20. The Hepatitis C infection could not be treated until my condition stabilised. I started anti-viral the medication, Harvoni, over Christmas last year (2018) and suffered the side effects; tiredness, weakness and headaches. I've been told that the infection looks cleared but have to wait till January for the final all clear.

21. My health problems, although not as acute as when I was admitted to hospital, are ongoing. I have severe digestive problems and liver cirrhosis. The virus has left me with permanent damage that I will never be able to repair, even with treatment and a healthy lifestyle.

Mental effects

22. When the virus had taken hold and I was so severely ill I considered killing myself to be rid of it. I thought I was going to die and could not sleep due to worrying about it. I thought I would be better dead than going through this.
23. I was prescribed Tramadol for the pain and insomnia, and it worked. Once I started to get to sleep I felt better. The lack of sleep and worry leaves you in a bad place. I am not the kind of guy would take on the counselling so I'm glad the medication helped me when I needed it.
24. That said, despite being over the worst of it I don't feel as sharp as I used to be. I still worry about the future I know I have an elevated risk of cancer and have still have to get regular checks for this. It doesn't leave you. I am also now teetotal which holds me back from socialising as much as I used to, which can be isolating.

Financial effects

25. At one stage, soon after my diagnosis, I was so weak daily chores became almost impossible so there was no way I could return to work. When I became ill I was preparing to check in for next spell offshore, a challenge I was excited to take on. I literally had my bag packed and only the week prior was undertaking safety training in a helicopter. To go from that to being unable to work was hard.
26. When I first became ill I thought I would be out of action for a couple of months, but I have only started working now in a different role on-shore.
27. When I was told that I would no longer work off-shore, as I failed the medical requirements my earning capacity plummeted. I went from making £100,000 a year to £30,000. I am not too bothered by that, what did upset me was more was that whilst ill I had to apply for Universal Credit and dip into my savings and pension. My wife only works two days and was caring for me almost full time. I

am a contractor, so if I don't work, I don't get paid. In truth, I really should have taken a little longer to rest and recover but I needed to return to work

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

28. I felt throughout my illness and recovery I was given good information and support by the doctors and nurses at Larbert Hospital.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. Once the doctors worked out that I was infected through a blood transfusion I was told I may be able to claim compensation through the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme.

30. Initially, I was too exhausted to read the documentation but once I did I was certain it applied to me. It fell entirely on me to gather information about my transfusion. The process was not user friendly. In my efforts I called Canniesburn Hospital, but it is now care home and holds no records. I moved on to Glasgow Royal Hospital and was able to recover record of my discharge, but nothing else.

31. My initial application was delayed until early 2019 as it took three to four months for my consultant to fill in his paperwork. He was overloaded and we had never met before, drawing out the process. On top of this he had to chase my records causing us to go back and forth, which was frustrating.

32. In July 2019 my claim was rejected, I put in an appeal straight away. In order to do so I had to prepare a 'paper' appeal stating my case. I was swiftly rejected on the assumption that my operation wouldn't have required a blood transfusion.

33. To me, this was fundamentally flawed. The discharge letter they relied on listed the wrong hand, my right hand, not my left, and did not even record my admission or discharge date. It was unfair of them to rely on such poor information.

34. In November 2019, I took my case to the appeal tribunal where it was heard by one lawyer and one doctor. I was questioned by the doctor who told me it was not routine to list anything about a blood transfusion on a discharge note. This appeal has failed, and my only other option would have been to get judicial review, but I did not have the money to follow up with this. I believe I was totally failed by the SSIBS. The system is not there to support you it is there to discredit any evidence you bring forward without having any right to challenge their findings. I never ever felt supported by this organisation and believe it is only there to support the medical service.

Section 8. Other Issues

35. The more I read the more I know I should have been told earlier. Thirty years is a long time not to do anything and I question the policy of destroying records. I work in the North Sea industry and all records are kept. If my industry can take care of itself I don't see why the government is unable to manage it. If nothing else, they could have asked me before destroying my records.

36. I am unsure why it was my responsibility to prove that a blood transfusion or blood products had been used during my surgery. This is not something a patient would be expected to record. The fundamental failure of the policy for the patient to prove and understand the process that was carried out during the operation is complete dereliction of the duties that should be carried out by the team carrying out the surgery.

37. There is no reasonable way that a patient can be expected to understand what was done to them during an operation unless there was a summary of the work carried out during that operation and submitted to the patient.

38. I have just recently been in for another operation for an accident that I suffered while falling in my shower. I was never asked or given advice or notice of the full procedure. I have now had two plates placed into the arm just above

previous wound. I have received no records or been informed of any blood products used during that operation.

39. I am going to ask for these records so I can review the information. I am going to find out if blood products were on standby even though I did not need blood it will be interesting to see how this is dealt with now.

40. I want to see if the conclusion the panel came to on my first operation holds merit with the assumptions that were made by the panel who rejected my request for support after contracting Hep C.

41. At the other end, the appeal system is a complete nightmare. I am a capable person and still don't have a proper idea of the criteria I am judged against; it felt arbitrary. I could have really used some kind of legal representation, or any form of advice to guide me through it, but received nothing. I can only imagine the difficulty someone with more health financial concerns than me would have had. With the appeal ongoing, and nothing settled, I worry for the future.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed Ian McEwan

GRO-C

Dated 23-11-2021

3/13/2022