

Witness Name: Elizabeth Hutton

Statement No.: WITN3800001

Exhibits: **WITN3800002 - 03**

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH HUTTON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27 November 2019.

I, Elizabeth Hutton, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Elizabeth Hutton. My date of birth is GRO-C1937 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I was married to Michael who was infected with Hepatitis A. His date of birth is GRO-C 1944. Michael was infected by blood transfusions and died on 24 January 1987.
2. My son Brian is present today for this statement in order to help me with dates. His date of birth is GRO-C 1968. I intend to speak about my husband's health. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.

Section 2. How Affected

3. I have never had closure properly for this ordeal and it may relieve pain that I suffered over the last 34 years.
4. My health is very good and I have a very good support system. I have four children, two boys and two girls. Two of the girls are working in Dublin and two of the boys are in Derry currently.
5. I met Michael in the 1950s when I was young and foolish. He studied Economics in the University College Dublin and he then began teaching in the North West Regional College.
6. We met before he was teaching and we went out for a few years and then he got very ill.
7. In 1959, one day he went to the hospital and a young doctor diagnosed him with a burst appendix. His friend called me to tell me what was happening as we were not married.
8. Michael had his first transfusion during this time in Altnagelvin Hospital. He had a 6 ½ hours operation where his bowel fell out during the surgery. The medical staff discovered that he had Crohn's disease. Dr. Bennet was the operating surgeon and he didn't know anything about Crohn's at this time.
9. The surgery was weakening for him. From then he was in and out for 2 years.

10. My mum was not happy at the thought of Michael and I getting married. She said "you sit down and you write a letter to Dr. Bennet to see if it is feasible to marry a sick man. You both should be physically and mentally well". My mum said "I'll give you 2 years" and she said that if we stayed together then she would pay for the wedding.

11. We were married in 1964 and moved into a house on GRO-C
For a long number of years, he was fine and he enjoyed his work. He was teaching at the time.

12. In 1972, after 'Bloody Sunday' we moved to GRO-C as there were checkpoints near our old house. We got a nice Bungalow. At this point, I had Timothy, Brian and Helen was just a baby. Michael and I had Pauline when we were living in the Bungalow.

13. Michael was teaching Economics, but he was a qualified accountant, and began working for the Local Enterprise Development Unit. He was starting up a new business in town and found the work interesting. However he did find it tiring. He missed the long holidays for teaching and worked very hard, and even would sometimes work in the evenings.

14. Most summers, we spent time in Rosscarberry in West Cork, where we would visit for a month with the family. In 1974, he took ill when we were visiting Rosscarberry, as he contracted pleuris. His doctor had retired at this stage. We had no doctor and so Dr. Spencer took over as his doctor. He saw him and said, "put him in hospital or stay at home for 6 weeks". So we decided to let him stay at home and he got better.

15. In 1975, Michael's Crohn's got bad again and Dr. Bennet said he needed to go to hospital. The large intestine again was the issue. Dr. Bennet operated and it went quite well considering he previously didn't know anything about Crohn's. He called them 'exploratory operations'.
16. He was in the Intensive Care Unit, and Dr. Bennet would typically call me and would inform me of everything and even how many stitches were used. The doctor had called me and told me that "he will be getting 9 pints of blood". This is where Michael had his second transfusion.
17. But one afternoon I went to the Intensive Care Unit to visit him but his bed was empty. I said "where is my husband?" The nurse came in and said "did nobody call you?" This was at 2pm, and she said that he had collapsed at 12pm. It was a Saturday and a young doctor was explaining to me that he didn't want to call Dr. Bennet, but he eventually did on my instruction.
18. Dr. Bennet came to the hospital and was shouting. He was so angry that he had not been called. Michael died for a few minutes. He went blue and was so cold. He looked like he was dead. Michael was given Anti-globulin drugs as there was a clot, a pulmonary embolism.
19. After that I was terrified every time he went into hospital after that. He had a semi-stroke and was paralysed for two weeks. That was the worst time. He was there in the Intensive Care Unit for 3 or 4 weeks. I was given 'Compassionate Leave' when I was working in Arts and Therapy.

20. He was bad at the time and didn't know me, I used to ring every morning. The nurses knew it was me when I rang and I could hear the machines through the phone. Michael would say to me when I visited, "the machines have kept them... they kept the butchers meat in them for me". I would often say, "do you know who I am?" Once he replied, "yes, you are the nurse coming with my smokes?" This happened in 1975.
21. In 1976, he had another Crohn's issue and went in and had another blood transfusion. This was his third blood transfusion as after every major surgery he had to have a transfusion.
22. After this, Michael had to resign from his job at the Local Enterprise Development Unit. He went back to teaching. But he never got better after this stint in hospital.
23. In 1979, we moved to GRO-C (back to the City side). Brian was finishing primary school, we wanted to move before Brian went to High School.
24. In 1979, his Crohn's came back again. He had to go back into Altnagelvin Hospital and had his fourth transfusion. Dr. Bennet wasn't sure to operate on him again. He said that Michael had a 50/50 chance of it going well. It was touch and go during the operation.
25. After the operation, he didn't get better and he was never the same again. He could never sit in the sun and he would wear a hat in the sun room in Donegal due to the Cortisone.

26. In 1982, he had to retire completely after this and he got a £6k lump sum and he put it away for the girls, and then he also got £46 per week as sickness benefit. So we were financially under pressure, we had 4 children and a granny to look after. It was really hard.
27. Michael would help mainly around the house. He would do the groceries and pick the girls up. I was very busy and I loved my work.
28. Michael was then back in hospital within the year. The routine at Christmas would be that Michael would go buy the boys clothes. The Christmas before he died, after dinner I said to him "are you going to take the boys out?" "No, I am not going to bother". I couldn't believe it.
29. I looked at him and saw the white of his eye was completely yellow and I knew he had jaundice. I told him that we needed to go to the hospital, and Michael said to me "I need to shave". But he shaved and nicked his mole. There was so much blood.
30. He was admitted. He had jaundice, they asked if he was in touch with anyone who had jaundice. They asked me if I did too. But when I wasn't with my children, they asked my children, "did your father drink much?" The children said that "he didn't drink much". I was so angry when I found out and they had him in a single room. He had an awful colour and had no appetite.
31. I kept thinking at least he didn't have to have a Crohn's operation and at least there was no major surgery. He was in for a few weeks, I was hoping he would get better. One day, I had a work duty at 2pm the phone rang and it was my sister who said to me, "Dr. O'Connor wants to see you now". Dr. O'Connor was the physician in charge of the drugs.

32. I went over to see him and Dr. O'Connor said that "Michael will not be getting better. I wouldn't give him a month." I said "can you not get a liver transplant?" He said "No, I am very sorry".
33. That day Michael asked me if he was going to die. I didn't know what to say and I had no one to talk to.
34. A month before he passed, I was asked into Dr. O'Connor's office and he told me what he was going to put on Michael's death certificate which is seen in Exhibit **WITN3800002**. He told me "I am putting Hepatitis A or B and Gross Malena". I didn't have a clue what he was talking about. I don't know why he was deciding about what he was going to put on the certificate. This was always in my mind.
35. On 24 January 1987 at 3am he died. Timothy and I stayed that night. Brian and the girls went home with my sister.
36. Someone gave me a black bag with his belongings and I saw his body in the mortuary. Afterwards I left the hospital with all his stuff, we couldn't get into my car because of an issue with my key. I tried to go back into the hospital but it was locked. It was just such a difficult day. It took an hour and a half to get home.

Section 3. Other Infections

37. In the early 1980s he was admitted to Waterside hospital with Tuberculosis (TB) from all the drugs. The doctor explained that "you have had so many drugs, and everybody has a little TB in their body, so the drugs have just made things worse."

38. Our daughter Helen, had [GRO-C] and Michael would sit with her in the hospital while she did her homework. The teacher would come to the house, and teach Helen as she could not go to school as she spent the most time with him and they were worried TB would spread in school.

Section 4. Consent

39. The doctors didn't ask for my consent or didn't tell me anything. I don't know if any testing occurred.

40. Dr. Bennet was not asking for my consent when he called to talk to me about the blood transfusions. Michael may have signed a consent form but I didn't sign any. I didn't know anything about the risks of the transfusions. I didn't take any interest in it to be honest.

Section 5. Impact

Impact on Michael

41. Michael was only 6 stone when he was really sick, but he was normally 10 stone. He was built like a jockey. He was given protein shakes for his Crohn's which would just go through him. If we went out for dinner he would just get sick for about 20 minutes and would leave me alone in the restaurant. Eventually, we wouldn't go out for dinner.

42. I didn't know much about Hepatitis. He was too weak to drink alcohol. He couldn't afford to drink alcohol or be an alcoholic. We didn't have enough money to do that.

43. He would never complain. He would never say he was in pain. He would just be quiet. He would shuffle as he had a semi-stroke after the pulmonary embolism. His hands would lock as well and he had a Vitamin B-12 deficiency. He got injected with Vitamin B-12 each month.

44. Sometimes he couldn't feel his feet. He would have mostly weakness and fatigue. He still would read and could focus. Some drugs affected him and he could sometimes not read.

Impact on the family

45. I worked when Michael was dying. After he died I had to pay for a housekeeper to look after the children as there were a lot of burglaries. Pauline was 11, Helen was 16, Brian was 18 and Timothy was 20 when their dad died.

46. I used to take my daughters over for musicals and theatre. I really tried to make a difference for them. When I was 62, I was healthy enough and the girls were doing ok and I retired.

47. My son Brian went to St Columbs College. He went to school with the daughter of Nurse Gormley, she brought my husband back to life. My husband died for a few minutes in 1975.

48. For the years leading up to it, we were always waiting for something to happen. Brian went off the rails before his dad's death and then more so after. Brian never really thought about it at the time, that his dad's death did have such an impact.

49. During the first and second year of High School, Brian was in the top 2/3 %. Then from third year until fifth year, he got suspended twice. The school recommended for Brian to see a Psychologist. He went from Captain of the Soccer team, to not being allowed to play (1981-84). Brian left the school with nothing.
50. Michael had gross fatigue in the late 1970s. My son, Brian remembers being 13/14 years old and when Michael would go in the car, Brian would worry that he was going to 'flake out' in the car. Brian would always be worrying when he left the house and question if he had been gone for too long.
51. We all worried about him and it was programmed into us. We just worried so much. Brian would compare his dad to his friends' parents, where they kicked the ball around. Michael was so weak, he couldn't put on weight. Brian would have been as strong as Michael when he was only 12/13 years old.
52. Michael bought a beautiful sheepskin coat but eventually he couldn't wear it. It was just too heavy for him. Some of his shoes were too heavy as well. He was such a light frame. After each operation he would lose so much weight and he couldn't put it on again.
53. In 1986, a young doctor was asking "how much did your father drink?" I felt like they kept pushing to get this out of Brian when I wasn't in the room. He was 18 but the children were there and were 11 and 15 years old. Brian was a bit shaken up after that. In any case Michael after drinking only one whiskey would have to go to bed.
54. For Michael's funeral, we had a closed casket as he didn't look well. It would frighten young children.

55. I was looking after my mother [GRO-C] in 1987. She was [GRO-C] She died 6 months after Michael died.

56. I don't know how I did it back then. I worked so hard, the boys went a bit wild. I found it so hard and you were on your guard at all the times trying to juggle everything. There was no such thing as having time to heal and mourn really. I had no one at all. It was a nightmare that I had to just deal with. My neighbours helped me with the children and I had a housekeeper.

57. In 2018, I was watching the News and they were talking about the Infected Blood Inquiry. I thought, "oh is that what happened to Michael?"

58. So, I am currently trying to get his medical records from Altnagelvin Hospital. I tried to get them but I was told to send a complaint form to Gransha Hospital. There have been letters back and forth and the most recent letter from Altnagelvin Hospital was not very helpful (Exhibit WITN3800003).

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

59. I don't think he was offered any counselling.

60. Michael was on a lot of Crohn's specific medication but nothing for Hepatitis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

61. I did not receive anything from a Northern Irish Blood Support Scheme.

62. I have had no financial help. What saved me was my job, I was lucky and it was Michael that encouraged me to do the social work course. As I worked as a craft instructor and then the board at work gave me a secondment to be a social worker.

Section 8. Other Issues

63. Everyone joked around that Dr. O'Connor was also known as God. They would say "what did God say today"?

I have given some other papers that I have to the Inquiry Investigators these are listed here:

Exhibit number	Date	Comment
WITN3800002	12/11/1998	Death Certificate for Michael Hutton. Cites cause of death: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hepatic Failure• Hepatitis A• Gross Melania
WITN3800003	2/10/2018	Letter from John McCauley to Elizabeth Hutton. Headed paper- 'Western Health and Social Care Trust'. Document refers to Elizabeth Hutton seeking medical records of Michael Hutton (deceased). Elizabeth Hutton informed that records have been destroyed which is in line with protocol.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

11/11/2020