

Witness Name: Nigel Povah

Statement No: WITN2794001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF NIGEL POVAH

I, Nigel Povah will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Nigel Povah. I was born on GRO-C 1952 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C Surrey, GRO-C

2. I live with my wife and I have 3 grown up children. I used to run my own company where I worked as an Occupational Psychologist and employed around 50 people, including a board of directors. I retired in June 2017.

This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to all of my medical records as not all were available.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I was diagnosed with mild/moderate Haemophilia A at the age of 1½ years old after biting my tongue which did not stop bleeding.

4. During the 1950s, I was given blood transfusions for my Haemophilia and then as a young child in the 1960s, I was given plasma concentrates instead. Between the late 1960s and early 1970s I started to receive Cryoprecipitate

and in 1978, I had my first Factor VIII (FVIII) treatment at King's College Hospital (KCL).

5. I only required FVIII as and when I had a bleed, which was usually about once a year.
6. When I was about 27 years old, I moved from London to GRO-C and received FVIII treatments at Frimley Park Hospital (FPH). I also received FVIII treatment at the Royal Surrey Hospital (RSH) (in January 1988) and at St George's Hospital (SGH) in Tooting. In or about the 1990s I was trained to self-administer FVIII.
7. SGH was the main Haemophilia Centre that I attended during my adult life and I was under the care of Dr Bevan.
8. I trusted the judgements of the doctors and consultants back then. I remember there were concerns about people developing immunity to FVIII, but it was never an issue for me, as far as I recall.
9. FVIII seemed to be far more convenient than the other alternatives such as Cryoprecipitate as it was quicker and easier to prepare and administer and it could be self-administered at home. I did self-administer FVIII once or twice. It was also convenient when I went on holiday, as I was able to take the treatment with me in case I needed it.
10. As previously stated I used to run my own company. We had a private health scheme within the company which was available to all employees. In the early 2000s I had a full "MOT" health check done through the health scheme and a copy of the detailed report was sent to me and my GP. Although I read the report there was nothing of particular note until I received a call from my GP surgery requesting that I make an appointment. When I attended the appointment, I was told that I had tested positive for Hepatitis C (Hep C).
11. The doctor briefly explained the consequences of Hep C to me and told me that I was going to be referred to a Hepatologist specialist at RSH. It occurred to me that it was only through my own initiative of having the health check,

that the infection was uncovered. Clearly had I not done so, one wonders if and when my condition would have been diagnosed.

12. I was never informed beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection from FVIII. I do not know if the doctors who treated me were aware of these risks and failed to inform me. Although I have subsequently read that this seemed to be the case in some instances. However, I do not know if this was the case with me but it is possible that they may have known about the risks, but failed to tell me.

13. When I met with the Consultant Hepatologist at RSH he provided me with further information about the Hep C infection and I believe I was given adequate information at this point. I was told to reduce my alcohol intake due to the risk of damage to the liver and to also not share my toothbrush as the infection could spread through bleeding gums.

14. I do not believe that the information could have been provided to me any earlier, as my condition had only just been diagnosed. However, I was not particularly impressed with the way the doctor at my GP surgery (not my usual GP) told me of the Hep C, as he dropped it as a bit of a bombshell.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I do not believe I was infected with any other infections as a result of FVIII.

Section 4. Consent

16. I was tested for HIV in 1985 at FPH and thankfully it was negative.

17. I knew I was tested for HIV but I did not know why I was being tested. Nobody explained to me the reasons for the test or that I may have been at risk of contracting HIV through FVIII. Although at that time there was much publicity about the risks of AIDS, so testing for HIV seemed a sensible course of action.

18. I knew I was treated with FVIII but I did not know it was infected with Hep C. I believe that if the hospitals knew there was a risk of FVIII being contaminated, they should have provided me with adequate information.

19. I do not believe that I was treated and tested on for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

20. The Hep C virus impacted me in a number of ways. Whilst I was running my own company, I started to feel very tired and often lost my concentration. During the afternoons at work, I used to nod off to sleep which was not normal for me as I was a very active person. I also had swollen limbs due to fluid retention. I now know that the above symptoms were in relation to the infection but did not know it back then.

21. I did not suffer any mental affects as a result. I am a psychologist and so I believe I am rational and can handle things pretty well.

22. As a result of the Hep C and the associated liver disease, I developed Oesophogal Varices for which I had to start taking medication in case they burst. I also experienced some fluid retention in my legs and as a result of this, I put on about one stone in weight.

23. In 2003 I had my first course of treatment for Hep C, which consisted of Ribavirin and Pegylated Interferon. The course was for 6 months. I was diagnosed in mid-2001 but was not given the treatment for about 18 months. Following this treatment, I was told it cleared the Hep C, but after about six months, the Hep C reappeared.

24. In around 2005-6 I went on the above treatment again. The course was again for 6 months and once again I was told that the Hep C had cleared but it reappeared 6 months later. By this time I had developed cirrhosis of the liver. I had a third course of treatment in mid-2011 whilst awaiting my liver transplant. This time I just had Pegylated Interferon. This course was for 3 months and I was told that it cleared the Hep C virus just before I had the liver transplant.

25. I do not believe that there were any other treatments which ought to have been made available to me. I believe I received the treatment that was available at the time, which was sufficient.
26. As a result of the above treatments, I suffered from night sweats, itching and cramps in the middle of the night.
27. As stated above, I got cirrhosis from the Hep C which led to a cancerous tumour in the liver, which was diagnosed in early 2011 and I was told that I required a liver transplant. Whilst awaiting a liver transplant I had regular ultrasound scans of the liver to ensure that the tumour did not grow over 5cm as it would become inoperable and I would need to have chemotherapy to shrink the tumour. In September 2011 I was told that the tumour had grown to 4.5cm and I needed to have an urgent transplant. For the first time I thought I might be on the verge of dying, as the doctors told me they had to find a compatible liver for me within 3 weeks.
28. On 3rd October 2011 I was admitted to KCH for a liver transplant. I weighed 14 stones on admission. After the transplant I had two further operations to tackle internal bleeding and other complications. I was on a cocktail of drugs to tackle the various issues associated with the transplant and as a result I experienced significant fluid retention and my weight went up to 17 stones. However, on 25th October whilst recovering in the ward I had gone to the bathroom and suddenly began to feel unwell. I called a nurse and told her I was not feeling well and she said "let's get you back to bed". When I stood up I collapsed and blacked out in the bathroom. I awoke 24 hours later in Intensive Care and was told that I had suffered a cardiac arrest due to one of my arteries having burst, which cut off the blood supply to the new liver. I then had to have a second liver transplant. I was lucky as there was a liver available at the time. I had a total of 6 operations during my 9 weeks in the hospital and I was eventually discharged in December 2011. I left the hospital weighing 10 stones (I had lost 7 stones).

29. I had 2 further operations over the next two years to tackle associated Hernia problems.
30. I did have anxiety about what the future held for me at times but once my liver transplant option was available to me, I believed I was going to get through it and survive it. That is my nature, to be positive and optimistic.
31. I am now monitored every 6 months and have been told that I have good liver function. However, I have to take immuno-suppressants, which they are monitoring because it can often affect the kidneys.
32. My infected status had an impact on my teeth. My private dentist said that my gums were not healthy and this resulted in gum disease. I did not have problems with my gums prior to the infection. I therefore believe the above was caused by the infection.
33. The infection had impacted my family. My wife and children went through hell when I had the liver transplants. My wife had a horrible day when I suffered the cardiac arrest, as she thought I was going to die. My family had stood by my side and supported me throughout.
34. Fortunately, there was no stigma attached to the Hep C when I was diagnosed. I never broadcast the fact that I was a Haemophiliac and I was very private about my health at the time. However, post diagnosis, I told my board of directors that I had Hep C and that I was going to have a liver transplant. I told all my staff about what was going to happen and that I was going to be taking time off. Everyone supported me at work and they were very sympathetic.
35. I did not get any comments relating to the Hep C, such as being a drug user or heavy drinker as by the time I told everyone, the Contaminated Blood Scandal had already become public knowledge and they knew I was just a victim.
36. I did not suffer any educational effects as I had already got 2 degrees prior to my diagnosis. I also did not suffer any work-related or financial effects as I

had my own company and was able to put plans in place to look after my company whilst I was off work.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

37. The NHS has been supportive and whenever the doctors ask me whether I need further support, I refused it on the basis that I am relatively self sufficient. This may be the reason I was never offered psychological support or counselling as I did not suffer mentally.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

38. I am a member of the Haemophilia Society and so I found out about the Skipton Fund. The application was straight forward and I received the Stage 1 payment in the sum of £20,000 in or about 2004.

39. In or about 2006, I applied for the Stage 2 payment and I received a sum of £25,000. The only difficulty I faced with this application was a delay in receiving the payment as they had lost my application and I had to resubmit a new one.

40. In 2011, I received another payment from Skipton in the sum of £25,000, which was a top up payment to what I received in 2006.

41. Since May 2011, I started to receive payments from the Skipton Fund, which has risen to the current figure of £18,000 a year (£1,500 a month).

Section 8. Other Issues

42. I nearly lost my life because of the Hep C. However, other people have died as a result of the contaminated blood scandal and I believe that the level of financial assistance which the family members have received is not sufficient. I would like to see that more significant payments are made as many have suffered as a result of this.

43. KCH was very helpful when they found out about the Hep C as well as for my liver transplant and I cannot fault them in any way. I believe they did the best they could and I am so grateful for that.

Anonymity

44. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

45. I do not mind giving oral evidence if required.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed... GRO-C

Dated 15/2/2019