

Witness Name: June Wixey
Statement No.: WITN3535001
Exhibits: **WITN3535002**
Dated: *11th October 2019.*

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JUNE WIXEY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 6 September 2019.

I, June Wixey, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is June Wixey. My date of birth is GRO-C 1951 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I was born in Leeds, but I now live in Somerset with my husband, Richard. We have four children. I worked as a carer.
2. I intend to speak about my late mother, Margaret Brearley, born GRO-C 1922, who contracted Hepatitis C ("HCV") as a result of receiving contaminated blood during an operation at Staffordshire General Hospital ("SGH") at the end of September 1989. In particular, I intend to speak about the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, and the impact it had on our family.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My mother loved ballroom dancing, and before she had her surgery, she used to dance with my father in competitions. She also worked from home as a seamstress and made all sorts of dresses and costumes. She was a very talented individual. We moved all over the country with my father's job, and eventually my parents settled in [GRO-C] I was living in [GRO-C] at that stage.
5. In September 1989 my mother went into SGH to undergo surgery for a blocked aorta. I had plans to go on holiday at the time, and my father told us to go anyway. She was in hospital for about 2 weeks following the operation. I was in regular contact with my father at the time. He thought the operation had gone well and that everything was fine. During the course of the operation I believe my mother received a blood transfusion. As far as I am aware, she was not warned of the risk of receiving contaminated blood. Apart from the blocked arteries, she did not have any health issues until after the operation.
6. As we were not living near my mother at the time, it is hard to say what the first indication of infection was. We went to see her regularly and she seemed well. A year or two after the operation she went to the doctor because she was feeling unwell, and my parents were told she had HCV.
7. I am not sure precisely what my parents were told by the doctor. My father only said that she was given infected blood during the operation and that she had HCV. I think maybe they gave him more information than this but I am not sure. She remained under the care of SGH. I do not think my mother was given adequate information about managing her infection, or about possible treatment.

8. Some time after my mother's diagnosis, she was questioned by the doctor about unprotected sex. She and my father were both very upset with the way they spoke to her. It was like they were trying to put the blame for the infection elsewhere, on to her. Mum and Dad had been married for 47 years and were devoted to each other.
9. I believe my mother must have been warned about the risk of passing on HCV, because after her diagnosis she would hold herself back more, particularly when she was interacting with her grandchildren. Prior to the infection she would always be cuddling the grandchildren.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. To the best of my knowledge, my mother did not receive any infection from contaminated blood apart from HCV.

Section 4. Consent

11. As far as I know, my mother did not undergo any treatment or testing for HCV without her consent. I am not aware of any treatment or testing undertaken for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

12. After my mother found out about her HCV, she slipped into depression. She used to get very tired and she had to give up dancing. She stopped working from home. I often think that my mother was having more problems than she was telling us, and that she did not want to make a fuss. She did talk to me about her depression. She told me she could not sleep and cried all the time. She would lie there thinking about her infection. It was constantly running through her mind.

13. My mother's HCV changed her. She was not the person she had been previously. She had always been full of life, and cracking jokes. Following her diagnosis all of that stopped.
14. Whenever my mother went to the doctor after her diagnosis she was always kept waiting until the end of the day. No matter what time her appointment was. They knew she had HCV and they did not want their equipment to become infected. She used to say she felt like a leper. I think she told some of her friends about her diagnosis, following which people started keeping their distance from her.
15. My mother was in and out of hospital during the last few years of her life. She got Deep Vein Thrombosis in her leg, and I believe this was a result of her HCV. Her body started to fail generally. She was always covered in bruises, which again was a result of the HCV. We used to drive up and see her at the weekends.
16. From my experience in care work, I was not impressed with the care my mother received from SGH. There was one incident where she was unable to reach her drink as a result of where it had been placed and became extremely dehydrated. I had to use a catheter bag and a pair of scissors to make her a straw which would reach the jug of water by her bed. Towards the end they took her off a drip.
17. My father called us and said we should go back to see her as she would not be with us for long. By the time we got back to **GRO-C** she was on Intravenous medication and unconscious. She was in hospital about 10 days and passed away, on 10 August 1997. On the death certificate the primary causes of death are recorded as 'Multiple Organ Failure' and 'Hepatitis C'. The secondary causes of death are recorded as 'COAD' (likely to mean Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease) and 'DVT' (likely to mean Deep Vein Thrombosis). I attach a copy of her death certificate as **WITN3535002**. She was 75 when she died.

18. After my mother passed away, the nurses came over to us and apologised. They said they were sorry that she had died, and that she had got the infection at that hospital.
19. I was devastated when she died. We did not expect it to happen so soon. My children really missed her. It was an awful way to lose my mother.
20. My parents had been married for 47 years, and they were extremely close. My mother died on Sunday 10 August, they were in fact due to move house that week. So on Wednesday we had the funeral, then on the Thursday my father moved out of the house in [GRO-C] and into a new house in [GRO-C] on the Friday. This was a house my parents had planned to share. My father knew nobody in the area, no friends or family. It was a terrible time for him, whilst still grieving for his wife.
21. Four years after my mother's death my father met someone new and they had a few years together before he had to go into care with Alzimmer's. We still travelled down from [GRO-C] to [GRO-C], where he then lived, to see him. He had forgotten just about everything, names and people. However when he saw me there was a glimpse of joy as I am the image of my mum. He passed away in September 2013.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

22. To the best of my knowledge, my mother never underwent any treatment for her HCV.
23. To my knowledge, my mother did not have any counselling or psychological support for her HCV. I am not sure if it was offered.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

24. I do not think any financial assistance was offered to or sought by my mother or father. I think if my father had been able to get financial assistance he would have paid for someone to come in and care for my mother.

Section 8. Other Issues

25. I want the Inquiry to force the authorities to come clean and accept responsibility for what they did to people's lives, instead of hiding it. I do think there has been a degree of concealment. Generally, I think the NHS do their best to hide major mistakes. People do things and deny these things. It is not right.

26. My brother, Robert Brearley, is also providing a statement to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____ GRO-C _____

Dated 11th October 2019.