Witness Name: WAYNE GATHERCOLE
Statement No: WITN4003001
Exhibits: WITN4003002
Dated: FEBRUARY 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF WAYNE GATHERCOLE

I, Wayne Gathercole, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Wayne Gathercole. I was born on GRO-C 1981 and I live at GRO-C Nottingham GRO-C. I live with my partner of five years and she has two children.

2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) from contaminated blood products.

3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.**

Section 2. How infected

4. I have severe Haemophilia A, diagnosed two days before my first birthday. I was treated at the Nottingham Haemophilia Centre at the Queens Medical Centre under the care of Dr Dolan.

5. I was treated with Cryoprecipitate and a variety of Factor VIII (FVIII) products. I refer to Exhibit WITN4003002 being a copy of my UKHCDO Patient Treatment Record to include a list of the FVIII products I was given throughout the eighties and into the nineties.

6. I cannot remember exactly when I was told that I had HCV. I think that it was when I was around the age of 12 or 13. I was sat with my mother and older brother in the chairs in the waiting area of the hospital corridor at a routine appointment. We were told there, by a nurse who just came out with it, and with people walking past. I remember my mum being really upset and *I* was upset because *she* was upset. I didn't really understand what I had but I knew that I had something and I knew it wasn't good. Growing up, I liked Queen and I later realised HCV was a similar thing to what had infected and killed Freddie Mercury. My dad was working and we drove back from Nottingham to find him at work and tell him. It was not a good day.

7. My mother insisted upon more information from the hospital and I went to a follow up appointment with one of the doctors. I do not remember the name of the doctor we saw but I was with my mother and father there. I was told to be careful with my toothbrushes. My parents were asked whether we had a second bathroom because, ideally, all my toiletries needed to be isolated from those used by the rest of the family. I remember that my mum was annoyed by the suggestion. She said 'no', that would not happen because she did not want me to be made to feel bad. We were advised not to tell other people that I had HCV and we followed that advice. My brother was at school whilst we were at that appointment and HCV wasn't mentioned in front of him from then on. Children talk and we didn't want anyone to find out.

8. I do not know how long I had had HCV before I was told. We assumed, at the time, that the infection had recently happened but I had in fact been feeling unwell for quite a long time. I was infected through FVIII concentrate but I do not know the product and/or batch from which I was infected. They swapped and changed my treatment on a regular basis and they changed my treatment (again) at that same hospital appointment.

9. No advice or warning about the risk of infection from treatment with blood products was given beforehand to my parents.

10. There is no reference to me being tested for hepatitis and/or being informed of the diagnosis amongst the limited number of medical records I have been provided with. HCV is first mentioned from in or around 1995, the year I was sent for a liver biopsy. I felt lethargic, nauseas and generally unwell for many years before I was sent for that liver biopsy. The fact that I was infected with HCV was pretty much played down by the doctors. They dismissed my fatigue with comments like 'oh, you're just a typical teenager' but I knew that was not the case. I was no stranger to being unwell through having haemophilia bleeds and it had become second nature to me to agree that I was OK if asked. I spent a lot of time at the hospital as an inpatient and for appointments. I rarely saw my GP through having so much contact with the hospital doctors and the hospital doctors were my primary point of contact. I was also jaundiced multiple times throughout my early teens and the doctors were very aware of this but there is no reference to jaundice in my hospital records.

11. The doctors were all very blasé at the Haemophilia Centre about my HCV infection. I remember clearly that my parents were talked down to and dismissed, particularly so my mum when she questioned things. There is a reference by a doctor in my medical notes that (my sickness) 'seems to be more of a problem for Wayne's mum than it is for Wayne'. She had a right to question things but was made to feel that she was over-reacting and acting irrationally. My parents were young parents (Mum had me when she was 20 years old). It annoys me to this day that she was talked down to like a wittering and bothersome mother. Look at what happened to me. I had something with the potential to kill me. She had every right to question what the doctors were doing.

12. I was told that I had self-cleared HCV in my late teens. I was only told that I had cleared the virus (as an aside) when I asked for further advice on managing the infection.

13. Around the time I started University I transferred from the Queens Medical Centre to the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield for haemophilia care.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I am uncertain but I believe I may have been exposed to the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV). I remember my whole family having to go to the hospital for the HBV vaccine. I once had a Hepatitis A Virus immunisation but I had a terrible reaction to it and I had no more after that.

15. I received a letter notifying me that I may have been exposed to vCJD but only after I had seen reports of the danger in the news. I attended follow up appointment and was informed that I had indeed been at risk through the batches I had been treated with at the relevant time. The doctors at the Haemophilia Centre were, again, quite blasé about it. There is nothing they and I can do about it. They can't test for it and if I have it, I have it.

Section 4. Consent

16. There was no specific consent given by me/my parents to my blood being tested for HCV. We were only made aware of the possibility of being infected with HCV when we were told about it after I was infected.

17. I once again refer to Exhibit WITN4003002. It would appear from my UKHCDO records that I was tested HIV negative in 1985. I was not formerly aware of this.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

18. I have no doubt that having HCV made me feel very unwell. When I left primary school I went to a private school for two years. I had to quit at the end of my second year there because I was averaging just two days per week as attendance and it was around that time that we were told that I had HCV.

As well as having haemophilia bleeds (ankles and left elbow were worst) at that time I was sickly and lethargic. My brother commented just recently that his memory of me was that I was 'always ill'. I loved school and would have done well but my parents were wasting their money when I was missing so much school.

19. The comprehensive school was just around the corner from where I lived and people in the neighbourhood knew I was a haemophiliac. They were also well aware of the association between haemophiliacs and HIV. HIV/AIDS had been in the news and all over the television. I did not tell anyone that I had HCV. I did not want to talk about it to anyone. Parents of my friends would ask me questions about my health and I felt uncomfortable.

20. I remember being in a class/tutorial when I was in Year 9 about HIV/AIDS and how it was transmitted. The teacher said that it transmitted by 'drug use, having unprotected sex, homosexuals and haemophiliacs'. Everyone in the class then turned around and stared at me. From that point in time I became the target of everyone's attention and they asked me things and said things about it to me.

21. As far as I am aware I self-cleared the virus in my late teens. I was approximately 18 years old (I was driving by then and could go alone to appointments). I had a girlfriend, I was worried about being sexually active and wanted to ask questions that I couldn't ask in front of my mum. I remember the doctor said 'Oh well you've cleared it anyway' as though I should have already known. I asked if I could still pass it on and was told 'Oh no. I don't think so'. The answer was too vague and I was reluctant to trust the doctors there anyway.

22. I am in no doubt that I am impacted psychologically by being infected with HCV. I held back and was dubious when it came to dating. The thought of whether I might get something else made me unsure of myself. I never spoke to any of my friends about having HCV. I built up mental barriers and I just acted like everything was fine. I did not even care to talk to my parents about

it because I did not want them to worry about me anymore than they already did. When I became older, in my late teens I did tell my friends because I knew that I was going to be OK.

23. I have had issues with dentists. I was always the last appointment of the day with my mother and brother going before me. They would be present to witness the proceedings whilst the dentist covered the room and donned several pairs of gloves just for me. The reality of having HCV really hits home when you are targeted that way. I didn't get the best dental care and have a wonky set of bottom teeth through lack of braces.

24. In terms of impact on my education of having HCV, I missed a lot of schooling because of it. I ended up having to have a tutor for a couple of hours a week. I was gutted to have to leave private school because I loved it there. I had a lot of friends there and I was forced to leave because I was so poorly.

25. If I had been well enough to stay at private school I would have obtained better grades and probably better qualifications. I was quite geeky and I loved reading books and watching documentaries on television. I did not learn anything new in the subjects of Science and French at comprehensive school until I was in Year 10.

26. I am now a Professional Artist. I was at home from school so often that I used to spend my time drawing and I grew to love art as a result and it is what I studied at University.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

27. Neither my parents nor I were offered any kind of counselling or psychological support. We were always told not to talk about it to anyone. We didn't tell the majority of our family members.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I did not receive anything through the trusts and funds because I self-cleared HCV.

Anonymity

29. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

30. I wish to provide oral evidence to the inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.. **GRO-C** ....

Dated... 19/3/20 ....