

Witness Name: Sharon Gambin

Statement No: WITN4011001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: December 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SHARON GAMBIN

I, Sharon Gambin will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Sharon Gambin and I was born on GRO-C 1976. I live at GRO-C GRO-C I am married to Wayne Gambin who has also given a witness statement to the Inquiry under WITN 1226001. I met Wayne in 1993 and we married on 7th October 1995. We have three children Carley 24, Kieran 22, and Kelly-Ann is 17. I work at Tesco as a retail assistant.
2. I make this statement as an affected wife of my husband, who was born on GRO-C 1974, and infected with both Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII concentrate.
3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my husband's medical records.**

Section 2. How Affected

4. My husband has mild Haemophilia A and received Factor VIII concentrate since he was aged 1.
5. I believe that my husband was infected in or around 1975 (aged 1) at The University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, formerly known as "*The Heath Hospital*". His consultant at the time was Professor Bloom.
6. My husband's mother was not provided with any information regarding the risk of infection from Factor VIII concentrates. His parents just trusted the hospital. They were never made aware of any dangers associated with the Factor VIII treatment.
7. I believe that my husband was aged 13 or 14 when he found out that he had hepatitis. He went to The Heath Hospital with his mother for what he thinks was a routine appointment. He was told of his infection in a very matter of fact way by a consultant called Dr Dafani.
8. Wayne was provided with insufficient information about what Hepatitis C was. He was told that there was a low risk of sexual transmission and that the main mode of transmission would be via blood-to-blood contact.
9. My husband has never been told by a medical professional that he had Hepatitis B but he was given regular Hepatitis B booster injections without his knowledge and therefore without his consent.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. My husband received a letter some time during the late 1990s or early 2000s advising him that he is at risk of vCJD after the death of a donor with vCJD. The hospital are unable to test Wayne so he is left worried forever that he might start to develop symptoms of vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

11. My husband believes that he was tested for HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B without his mother's or his knowledge and therefore without consent. The consultants routinely took his blood at every appointment.
12. My husband also believes that he was used for the purposes of research because samples of his blood were taken from him when he was very young. He was, I believe, used as a lab rat.
13. My husband was definitely treated without his knowledge and consent and an example of this are the Hepatitis B boosters which he was routinely administered.

Section 5. Impact

14. One of the first conversations we had when Wayne and I first met revolved around his diagnosis of Hepatitis C. He was worried about it, having just then (in 1993) been told that he had it. I didn't know what Hepatitis C was. I mentioned it to my Dad and my Dad told me that he thought it caused liver disease. My Dad asked me if I could catch it so I asked Wayne but he did not know. Nothing had been explained to Wayne about it and I only started to understand it properly when we started getting closer and I went to his hospital appointments with him.
15. It was only when the hospital explained that Wayne's liver was bad and that Hepatitis C was a blood borne virus that I began to understand the seriousness of it. We were told that we were not allowed to share a tooth brush but there was no mention that it could be transferred sexually. I believed that as long as I kept my distance from Wayne if he was bleeding, I would be okay. Even then I was not really worried. I didn't understand the danger.

16. Wayne and I do not tell people that he is infected with Hepatitis C. It is not something we talk about and they do not need to know. Not long after we met, Wayne was placed in a side room isolated from everyone else when he was admitted to the Royal Gwent Hospital for treatment. He was treated like a leper there with the staff insisting upon visitors wearing gowns, gloves and masks during visits. Wayne's mother and I refused to do so. It was a horrible experience for him.

17. Wayne has had three attempts at Hepatitis C clearing treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin. The first and second attempts resulted in him becoming really unwell with bad rashes that blistered his skin. Wayne's mental health was seriously adversely affected with the second and third attempts. He was already very depressed but his depression significantly worsened with the treatments. Wayne has been left with severe brain fog and has no memory. You can tell him something and he forgets it straight away. I ask him to write it down but he forgets that he has written it down. His immune system is low. Having a cold puts him in bed. Wayne's teeth are ruined. Wayne's mental health is by far the worst side effect. Wayne is only a small man but he had to eat a lot of fat over the course of 12 months during the third treatment. The tablets had to be taken with 20g fat three times per day. Wayne was 11 or 12 stone at the start of the treatment but weighed 22 stone at the end of it. He was then having countless bleeds into his ankle and knee joints because he was carrying too much weight. He needs to keep his joints healthy. He is doing well with his weight now having lost a lot

GRO-C

GRO-C

18. Wayne ended up losing his job at Parcelforce after the second attempt at clearing Hepatitis C. He was an owner driver at Parcelforce on a very good wage. We went from Wayne having that good wage to nothing. The clearing treatment floored him and he just couldn't go to work. I worked as many hours as I was physically able at an amusement arcade, sometimes 13 hours, seven days per week trying to keep our heads above the water.

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Kelly-Ann was born in 2002 and Wayne was not well enough to look after her. My dad had to come and

look over her whilst I worked. I missed out on a lot of Kelly-Ann's upbringing as did Wayne. My dad taught Kelly-Ann to walk and to read and write.

19. I am grateful for the treatment but have always thought that there must have been kinder ones. The hospital has always maintained that the treatment was a trial treatment in any event. Wayne has been treated like a guinea pig. Treatments should make you better not make you ill. Wayne has **GRO-C** **GRO-C** depression **GRO-C** **GRO-C** **GRO-C**. The Hepatitis C is now undetectable but Wayne has stage 3 liver cirrhosis. Due to his health, Wayne is only able to work part time.

20. I am a strong person. I have never judged Wayne and do not worry about myself. I worry about Wayne and his health. **GRO-C** **GRO-C** **GRO-C** He gave it up for a while but it is starting to happen again with the start of the Inquiry. We were watching the Inquiry on live stream but have stopped because of how it was affecting Wayne. It has, however, really opened our eyes to the severity of the scandal. The children have never known their father to be anything but unwell. That is not right. Wayne's mood swings and depression have affected the children because they grew up thinking that was normal. We worked our way up and bought our own home but it all got taken away from us because of the treatment. We recently thought we might be able to buy our own home again. We were accepted for a mortgage in April and the 'Right to Buy' option on our current home ends in February 2020. However we have not yet been brought into line with the additional financial assistance infected people receive in the rest of the UK. Until that happens it is too much of a stretch for us financially.

21. Wayne has lost a lot of trust in the Haemophilia Centre and the medical profession in general. Just the other day he was sent to hospital to have a

camera put down to investigate further the digestion problems he has now developed. The hospital refused to do it because of HCV and the vCJD risk. He did not tell me at first but he was very upset by this.

22. I was offered a Hepatitis C blood test in or around 1996. The test came back negative. GRO-C I have been told that I am high risk for Hepatitis C and am not allowed to donate blood as a result. I am allowed to donate bone marrow. I would very much like to be able to donate blood. Because of Wayne it was important to me. I am now asked (by questionnaire) to declare to the dentist if I have ever been exposed to Hepatitis C. I then have to explain the circumstances before they are satisfied that I am not a danger.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

23. Wayne has had to endure countless blood tests, xrays, scans and fibroscans.

24. None of us (me Wayne or the children) have been offered any support or counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. My husband received the Stage 1 Payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund (SF) approximately 16 years ago. He does not recall how he found out about the SF.

26. He received the Stage 2 Payment from the SF about 8 years ago.

27. My husband was aware that he could obtain grants from the SF but he was dissuaded from applying because he had heard that the procedure was somewhat protracted and that you had to obtain three quotes and disclose bank statements.

28. He also receives winter fuel payments from the SF of approximately £500 per year.

29. My husband believes that the SF was not fit for purpose and that the victims of the contaminated blood scandal needed much more support than that which was offered by the SF.

30. Wayne was told that his monthly money paid through WIBSS would be raised by £800 (in line with the rest of the UK). We have applied for the Right to Buy on our house with a deadline that is soon to expire.

Section 8. Other Issues

31. I would like answers. I would like to know if innocent people were willingly and knowingly infected and I want to know who actually knew about it.

Anonymity

32. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I do not wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-C

Dated. 21/1/2020