

Witness Name: Carol Pritchard

Statement No: WITN4020001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: January 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CAROL PRITCHARD

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I, Carol Pritchard, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Carol Pritchard. I was born on GRO-C 1970 and I live at GRO-C  
GRO-C with my husband, David and  
our daughter GRO-C who is 14 years old and our son GRO-C who is  
13 years old.
2. My husband, David Mark Pritchard is infected with the Hepatitis C Virus  
(HCV) through contaminated blood plasma and Factor VIII (FVIII)  
concentrate. David has provided his own Witness Statement to the Inquiry  
(under Witness Number WITN1497001).
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to  
David's full medical records.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

4. David has hereditary spherocytosis which is a blood disorder. David believes that he was infected with HCV during the period 1985-1987 when he had multiple doses of blood plasma and FVIII concentrate.
5. David and I are old friends. We got together in 2001 and we married in 2002.
6. David and I both had children from a previous marriage but we wanted children together. We were told together in 2005 that David had HCV at the Nuffield Clinic where we were attending for IVF treatment. We had had a routine blood test before commencing the IVF treatment and we were then called back to the Clinic for the results. If we had not sought IVF treatment in the first place, David would not have known that he was infected.
7. It was a huge shock to us that David had HCV. I didn't really know what it was. The IVF clinic weren't able to provide us with much information but they confirmed that they were happy for us to carry on with the IVF. We went home and started researching it ourselves and it did not sound good. It was known to be a silent killer. We were so worried. The outcome looked bleak and, at that point, we didn't know if we should carry on with the IVF. David was then referred to the Royal Liverpool Hospital for more information.
8. It was a very stressful time for us. David had to track down and inform everyone he thought might have been placed at risk of infection since 1985. There is a huge stigma attached to HCV with people assuming you are a drug addict and sharing needles.

## **Section 3. Other Infections**

9. To the best of my knowledge, David has not received or been put at risk of any other infections.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

10. To the best of my knowledge, David was not tested or treated without his consent.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

11. When we married and planned to have children, David and I had everything to look forward to and to be optimistic about. We both had very good jobs. I was an Accounts Manager and David was a Head Gardener for MBNA. We had savings with which we could pay for IVF and to use for us to plan a move to a larger home (David was living with me and my son Aaron who was just 15 years old at the time).

12. I had had six weeks of fertility injections and found that I was already pregnant when I went for the first IVF attempt. It wasn't until after our daughter, **GRO-C**, was born on **GRO-C** 2005 and we attended at the Royal Victoria Hospital that we learned the full implications of the HCV infection to include that David had genotype 1a which was difficult to cure.

13. The MBNA pensioned David off as soon as he told them he had HCV and The Royal Victoria Hospital gave him a life expectancy of less than five years. David had to disclose his infection everywhere, all prospective employers and insurance groups. Life is about honesty and we try to live like that, but once you disclose you are infected people want nothing to do with you. David was only 48 years old when he had to leave MBNA, and he lost out on a lot of money. David could not get another job. We didn't know what David was going to do and we ended up investing the money we were going to use towards a new home into starting up a gardening business together. It was a leap of faith for me in giving up my job to start a new business.

14. David and I wanted another child and David was given a grace period of six months before he started the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. They were

not prepared to delay the treatment for anything longer than that and were specific that we should not try for a child once David started the treatment. We didn't really appreciate what we were doing at the time as we had no idea whether the treatment would be successful and/or just how incapacitating it was going to be for David. We were under so much uncertainty and pressure but I did fall pregnant and [GRO-C] was born on [GRO-C] 2007.

15. The Interferon and Ribavirin treatment was relatively new. It was like having chemo everyday for David. David would be irritable within less than an hour of taking the treatment. David's depression was awful. It was a horrendous time for us. We did not take on board the severity of the treatment, the psychological affects, the night sweats, the not sleeping and the mood swings. It was terrible to deal with after getting home from a long day's work. As well as caring for two young children, we had to change our own bed sheets daily. I was kept awake by David night after night. It affected everything. I became depressed myself. There was a big black cloud hanging over us when our children were young. There was no joy in being new parents. I love David to bits but we didn't know what was going to become of us and had to go to Relate for help.

16. David struggled to work during the treatment. We had a young lad named Joel working with us, who was amazing. [GRO-C] was at nursery at this point. We had great support with my parents, helping out with the children. I look back now and wonder how we survived it all, but we had no choice but to carry on through it. We hoped that David would be back on his feet after the treatment but in the end he was out of action for about three years. David had advanced arthritis in his knee and, eventually, it had to be removed and replaced. He could not walk for a year. His leg was in a brace. He could price and come on jobs but was unable to do a day's work. This had a massive impact on our financial situation. Our credit cards were maxed out and I had to sell some jewellery in order to get by. A very close friend came to our rescue and helped us out with a loan and business plan (as detailed in David's Statement) otherwise we would have gone under.

17. My health visitor also came to our rescue. She understood the strain we were under and got involved. We were living in a small terraced house with Aaron in one bedroom and David and me with **GRO-C** and **GRO-C** in the other. It was too small and we were on top of each other. She helped us get rehoused by improving status/score on the local authority waiting list. By 2009 we were planning and implementing a house move. We moved into our lovely house in the countryside which we managed to buy just five years ago.

18. In addition to being infected with HCV, David has developed other illnesses. David has now been diagnosed with diverticulitis. He seems to have problem after problem.

19. Our children know what has happened to David. **GRO-C** also has hereditary spherocytosis and she has had to have two blood transfusions. I know that what happened to her father plays on her mind. David's family have been affected as have my family and all the help they have had to provide when we were struggling. Our families feel a lot of anger for us this should never have happened.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

20. I refer to David's Statement.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

21. I refer to David's Statement. I would also add that we applied for help from the Skipton Fund for new beds when we moved home. It was an incredibly degrading process. You have to go into shops in order to obtain various quotes. You then have to wait for a long time for a decision. The money came to us in the form of vouchers. It was horrible and we often avoided going through the process of applying for funds because of it. We gave up on a lot of things we actually needed.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

22. David and I have campaigned for answers to what went on. Someone knows the truth. This is no longer about money, it's about the truth. No one even told David that he was infected with HCV and/or followed it up with an apology. He would not be here today had we not gone for IVF at our own expense.

**Anonymity**

23. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I understand that this statement will be disclosed as part of the Inquiry. I would like 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
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Dated ..... 11/2/2020 .....