

Witness Name: MICHAEL BURKE

Statement No: WITN4701001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: December 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BURKE

I, Michael Burke will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Michael Burke. I was born on GRO-C 1969 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C New Zealand.
2. My brother, Francis John Burke known as John (born on GRO-C 1971), was co-infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated Factor VIII (FVIII) blood products. He died after advancing to AIDS Related Complex (ARC) on 8th October 1994, aged 23.
3. My mother and father have provided Witness Statements to the Inquiry (WITN1123001 and WITN1124 respectively).

4. This Witness Statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my brother's medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

5. John had severe Haemophilia A, diagnosed when he was about a year old.
6. John was under the care of Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) before transferring to St Thomas' Hospital in London (STH) at aged 13. His Consultant at STH was Dr Savidge. My parents believe John to have been infected with FVIII concentrate from the USA given to them by STH to administer to John at home.
7. My parents were not pre-warned of the risk of exposure to infection through FVIII concentrate beforehand. They trusted the doctors, my mother having been assured, by Dr Savidge in particular, that the American product was heat treated and safer than the UK products.
8. I believe my mother was told that John was infected with HIV by Dr Savidge in a corridor at STH in or around the mid 1980s. I remember mum coming home from the hospital with John and the subsequent fearful conversations she had with my Dad and with her siblings (my Uncle has haemophilia). I do not believe that my parents were given any information to help us understand and/or manage the infection. There was a lot of rumour, gossip and speculation at that time. It was only when the news of HIV/AIDS came out in the media that we started to appreciate the enormity of the situation. The truth and the reality in relation to John being infected with HIV really hit home then.
9. We were only informed that John was also infected with HCV after his death.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I do not think that John was infected with anything other than HIV and HCV.

Section 4. Consent

11. John was tested for HIV without my parents consent as my mother knew nothing about it and was shocked to be informed of the infection (in a corridor) having no prior knowledge of any test.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

12. John was a good lad. As a haemophiliac he had a robust mindset. He knew a nasty knock or fall could itself be the death of him. He was really inspired by the doctors and nurses that treated him at GOSH. They were wonderful with all the children and had a wonderful way of looking at the world that they passed on to the children they treated, including John. John wanted to be a doctor during his school years. He did well at school and had a close-knit group of friends.

13. When John learned that his treatment had been tainted with HIV, he took everything on board and decided that life was for living. He didn't know how much time he had. Most children of our generation left school and started working to earn some cash and John was no exception. He worked as a cab driver and did long nights. He earned a good living and was able to buy himself a little flat. He seemed quite content. He wanted to live as normal a life as possible.

14. John was a cocky, silly little bugger at the best of times. He knew exactly what he could and couldn't get away with. Fortunately, the majority of people that knew John with HIV positive were friendly and supportive. We were very close as brothers and I always looked out for him. If they messed with him, they would have to deal with me first.

15. John's physical health started to deteriorate a couple of years before his death. He lost a lot of weight. He was less able to do things for himself and what would otherwise be very normal days to us would drain him completely. He had to take a lot of medication and he struggled mentally. He hid his feelings from our parents who were caring for him at home. There was a huge strain on the whole family. I saw a lot of stuff happening and would hang out with him as much as possible. When John was low, I'd grab his things and take him out and let him do anything he wanted to do. This, in itself, created arguments between me and Mum. Small arguments would sometimes turn into massive fights because we were all so tired and stressed. My dad was of a generation where men didn't show their emotions so he just got on with it without talking about it. You could see the toll John's failing health was taking on both parents. It weighed heavily on them. My uncle and aunt came around a lot, offering support to my parents.

16. I knew my brother was in a bad way, but I still went to work in order to maintain some form of normality. It was easier said than done. I relied heavily on friends after John died and hit the bottle a little harder than normal. You try to pretend things don't hurt you when they do. The small things get to you like my Dad setting four places at the table instead of three. My mum became depressed in a big way and was put onto medication. My parents lost a lot and although they can't have their son back, they want accountability and for the government to turn around and admit that they made a big mistake in killing so many people with their misuse/mismanagement of dangerous medical products. My brother was taken away before his time.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

17. John had a lot of treatment albeit it was difficult for them to combat his health problems in conjunction with having haemophilia and HIV. I was never involved in the conversations as my mum went to John's hospital appointments with him. I don't think any of the medications did anything for him.

18. John was heavily reliant upon pain killers towards the end. It was painful for him just turning over in bed and breathing.

19. I do not believe John to have been offered any counselling or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

20. I refer to my parents' Witness Statements.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

21. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

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Dated.....10/12/2020.....