Witness Name: Alan Edward Sturman
Statement No.: WITN4753001
Exhibits: None
Dated: 27-11-2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALAN EDWARD STURMAN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 22 July 2021.

I, Alan Edward Sturman, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Alan Edward Sturman. My date of birth is GRO-C 1954 and my address is known to the Inquiry.

2. I am a retired welder and mechanic. I have a daughter and now live alone. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my life.

3. I can confirm that I am not legally represented and that the anonymity provisions have been explained to me and I am happy for my story to be told. I am also aware that if I make any criticism of any medical professional they will be afforded the right of reply.

Section 2. How Infected

4. On the 25th March 1979, I had a motorcycle accident when a car pulled out in front of me on Ber Street in Norwich.

5. I lay injured, waiting for 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. I was conscious the whole time. My bone was sticking out of my right leg and there was a large pool of blood around me. From the accident scene, I was taken to the old Norfolk Norwich Hospital in Surrey Street, and was seen by Dr Watson Farrow in the A&E department.

6. Dr Farrow advised me to have my leg plated, and made it sound like it was a simple thing, easy to do. As my blood pressure had dropped quite low, I was given blood during the operation, and I remember seeing the red blood bag after I woke up from the operation. The operation was done by Dr Rajan Hassan at West Norwich hospital.

7. My mother, who rushed to the hospital along with my father to give permission for the operation, noted that I had around 5 pints of blood all together. I was never given any warning about any risks associated with receiving a blood transfusion at the time of the operation and neither were my parents.

8. A few days after the operation, I was allowed to wander around the ward. I was advised to walk around as much as possible so that the bones would fuse together better.

9. Following the accident, there was a police investigation into what had happened, and it was in the local newspaper at the time. I did a follow up interview later with the police. However, I do not know what happened after that as I heard nothing further although I did receive £3,000 compensation sometime in the early 1980s.

10. Around 20 years later, I think in early 1997, I went to the A&E department at the Old Norfolk Norwich Hospital as I felt ill. My left arm and neck were aching. I

had not been right for a few days. I was seen again by Dr Watson Farrow, who was still there and after an examination blood tests, were taken to check on my heart. Within the hour, I was told outside the hospital that I had had a minor heart attack, and, just for good, measure that I had also got HCV! Dr Farrow advised that it looked like I had been infected with HCV for quite a while as my liver was showing signs of being damaged. I was shocked by this, wondering how I had picked up such an infection but I did not know much about it.

11. I asked Dr Farrow what the HCV diagnosis meant, and he advised me, more or less in the same breath as informing me I was HCV positive, that I should get a good solicitor.

12. I was in hospital for 3 days during this period, and I may have been assessed for treatment with Interferon straight away following diagnosis. I recall being seen by a number of different doctors and being advised that I would need further tests to confirm the presence of the infection. At this stage I also underwent a liver biopsy, which was quite painful and required me to lie still for over 12 hours after it was completed.

13. At the time, I didn't really know what HCV was, and what the infection meant, so I wasn't scared as such. I was not told about the risks of HCV when I was informed of my diagnosis nor about any precautions to take or possible lifestyle changes to make.

14. After diagnosis and on leaving hospital, I spoke to my friends and some said that they knew people who have died of HCV. I was worried when I heard this so I went to see my GP. I was given some further information, including that it was very unusual to give the infection to other people, around 2%.

15. There was no mention that my wife, or any of the other women that I went out with prior to being married, should be tested. My wife and I separated in 1984. I asked whether I should have my daughter tested, however I cannot remember what the GP said. I don't believe that she has been tested.

Section 3. Other infections

16. I have not been subjected to any other infections apart from HCV. I have not suffered any other major illnesses as a result of being infected but it makes you wonder if having the virus in my body undetected for so long has had an impact on my heart problems. Now, I have liver cancer which to mind my mind is a direct result of having the hepatitis. I will speak more of this later.

17. I have been tested several times for HIV, and luckily these have all come back negative.

Section 4. Consent

18. I was not aware that I was being tested specifically for HCV, however I consented to having my blood tested when I was in A&E for the heart attack. After the initial diagnosis, I was advised to make an appointment to see the doctor in a couple of days for the confirmation tests and I went back within a week.

19. I consented to all HCV treatments.

Section 5. Impact

20. Between 1979 and 1997, I used to buy old motorcycles, take them apart and rebuild them. At the time, I would go all over the country to get parts to build up the bikes, and was able to take an engine apart and rebuild it with my eyes closed. In the 1980s, I began having difficulties with remembering and my cognitive skills deteriorated. I would forget how to put the motorcycle parts back again so I'd have to sell them. At first, I became frustrated and annoyed, and then I became disappointed with myself.

21. This memory loss led to me having to leave my well-paid welding job at Oakleys, a local firm, as I was making numerous mistakes, and one in particular that could have led to a serious accident. After the potential accident, I spoke

to my manager and asked him if I could go home. My colleagues had nicknamed me 'Winston' at this point due to all the silly mistakes I was making. It was heart-breaking for me as I loved my work and underneath I knew that I knew more than they did.

22. After this, I had to look for another job. I went on an engineering course for 6 months. I was able to find a job straight away as a lathe turner. However, it was very mundane and I was turning one thing over and over again all day. I did not have enough experience or time served to do the things I had done with my own lathe.

23. Unfortunately, I lost this job and had to rely on benefits. During this time, I would help my friend who was a blacksmith as I wanted to learn the trade. However, because of this, my benefit money was cut down as they thought I was 'working'. Whilst helping my friend, I would learn something, but then 40 minutes later it would be gone. This only compounded the sense of frustration that I had been feeling for some time.

24. In 1994/5, I began working for my brother on a self-employed, flexible basis. I had a responsible job, and would drive the lorry to pick up workers and loads of material. This lasted around 2 years, but in 1996 I stopped working as I was not healthy enough to cope with work and responsibility. I was suffering from extreme tiredness and fatigue as well as becoming more am more easily confused and forgetful.

25. I had years of being disappointed and losing good jobs. I could get jobs easily enough I had the background, however in practice I couldn't do them. I was the only person that knew that I could do them for myself, however not in a busy work environment and not where someone else may be put at risk if I made a mistake. I can't really quantify the financial cost to me but it runs into the tens of thousands of pounds. I was well paid when working and had a good standard of living. Things are not so easy now.

26. Before my diagnosis, I was sent for a response test because of my memory issues and brain fog. My GP gave me suppositories to take to help, however nothing was talked about a potential HCV infection at that time. I did undergo various tests, including blood tests but I never received a conclusive result.

27. In March 1997, almost immediately after diagnosis, I started treatment. I was placed on Interferon. I was informed that some people have side effects, however that these were only mild, and that I should not worry. The only concern was whether the treatment would interact with the medication I was taking for my heart.

28. Whilst on this treatment, I had to inject myself subcutaneously 3 times a week and was monitored every month. However, the treatment was unsuccessful. I think it lasted as long as 15 months or so. I lost a lot of weight whilst on this medication and my fatigue was worse than ever. There were kind of flu like symptoms and I often did not feel 'right'. I recall I was prescribed fortified drinks to help with the drastic weight loss.

29. I remember the GP saying that I was quite poorly during this time. The doctor said this about my father the day before he died so this stuck in my mind. I associated it with being near death. It was an anxious time but what can you do? You have to get on with it. I recall I was prescribed fortified drinks to help built me up.

30. Nothing much happened after the failure of the first trial. Then around the end of 2000, I started trials of Ribavirin and Interferon at Addenbrookes hospital under the care of Tracy Waddle. I was kept in hospital for the first week of this treatment in case I had any severe side effects, which had been outlined, such as thrush. Luckily, I didn't have any side effects that I noticed apart from an energy drain and worsening memory loss. This treatment lasted around a year. Again, it was injections, this time with tablets. I had to visit the hospital at Addenbrookes to collect the medication every two weeks, as my local hospital was not licenced to dispense the drug.

31. I had a second heart attack around 2000 whilst on this treatment. I was told by a doctor that I was the first person to have a heart attack on this treatment, and I asked why I was still taking it. No one said to stop the treatment. In fact, they seemed quite proud that I had a heart attack but was able to continue on the medication. Soon after this, I had a stent put in my heart. In 2017, I had to have another stent put in as I was having increasing incidents of angina.

32. Around 2001, I successfully cleared the virus. At this point, I wanted a letter to say that I did not have HCV anymore, and that I was no longer a risk to other people. I was really happy to find out that I cleared the virus and I thought it would mean I could get back to my normal life.

33. My HCV diagnosis did not cause any problems with friends or family. I didn't lose any friendships or suffer any kind of stigma. In my opinion this is partly because nobody really knew what HCV was. All the publicity at the time was around HIV and AIDS

34. The lady I went out with after my diagnosis did not care about my HCV infection, and in all my subsequent relationships it has been fine.

35. I have a pretty positive attitude with regards to my HCV infection. I believe that if I get miserable it will make it worse, and I will drive my friends away. I have had and dealt with it so now I just get on with my life.

36. After diagnosis and treatment, I had to start taking in lodgers due to a lack of income. The Social Services and Council knew about this, and it did not affect my benefit payments.

Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support

37. Because of my symptoms, my GP asked whether I wanted to register as disabled. However, I declined as I didn't want to be labelled with another stigma I would have to live with.

38. At the time I was diagnosed, or during treatment, I asked my GP whether I could see a psychologist to see if the way I was coping with things was normal. I had one visit from a student psychologist, however I thought it was a waste of time and never saw her again. I can't remember whether any psychological support was offered by the hospitals at the time of diagnosis but I don't think so.

39. As mentioned, I had my first liver biopsy at the time of my HCV diagnosis. I was told the result was not as good as it could have been, and that I should keep an eye on it. I then started having ultrasounds on a regular basis.

40. When I was being treated at Addenbrookes hospital in the later trial. I was told that my liver was cirrhotic, and that I had fatty deposits in my liver. As a result, I was monitored regularly. Then, the frequency increased and I received scans every 3 months for 8-10 years, until about 6 months ago I found out that I had developed liver cancer. It is generally accepted that the liver cancer developed as a result of the fatty liver tissue which itself was caused by the HCV being left untreated for so long. I am now on the transplant list.

41. I have undergone an operation to burn out the cancer. Once clear, I will receive a liver transplant when something suitable is available. In fact, I have now been told recently that the operation has burnt out the cancer where the arteries enter the liver on either side but there is a small part of the cancer still present. I am now worried that this will impact on the chances of me receiving a transplant.

42. I also have an enlarged spleen, and type 1 diabetes. I have also stopped drinking alcohol after the cancer diagnosis. I am sure that some of this is related to the infection being untreated in my system for so long but no one will say so. Until this diagnosis I was a strong healthy individual with no need to see a doctor and now look where I am.

43. I was treated very well throughout my diagnosis and treatment by medical professionals.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

44. In 2004, I registered with the Skipton Fund. I may have received letters from the Skipton Fund asking for further information, however as I had been declined left, right and centre by solicitors when I wanted to sue the government, I forgot about it, and gave up as I didn't think it would get anywhere. No one seemed willing to listen at the time and there is only so much disappointment and rejection that you can take.

Section 8. Other

45. I started litigation against the government when I first found out about my diagnosis in 1997. This was something that was advised by Dr Watson Farrer.

46. I saw a solicitor at Hatch Brenner in Norwich. They got all my medical records whilst still available, and I received generic copies. We took the case to court, however the High Court in London decided that the Government was not responsible as HCV was not categorised at the time I was infected.

47. I was upset as I knew I hadn't infected myself - I wasn't an intravenous drug addict, nor had I had any other blood transfusions. I had never been treated medically abroad and had only a small tattoo, done in a professional setting in 1981 of my daughter's name just after she was born. The shop is still going strong. I was disappointed and angry that I would not receive even an apology for what had happened.

48. After this, my sister recommended that I see her solicitor, however they were very unhelpful and told me that I should just grow up, not complain and accept it. Because of this, I did not see the point in going on with the litigation, and got rid of all the papers and medical records after a while. They just brought back bad memories for me. I am unsure whether Hatch Brenner still holds copies of my records but I did go there some time back and asked but was told that everything is destroyed after 6 years.

49. With regard to other issues, stories have come out in the same way as my education about the situation has evolved. There is now evidence that blood was coming from America, it is accepted this is true. However, before, this was flatly denied at the time of my legal process taking place.

50. I blame the government, especially Margaret Thatcher and Gordon Brown for changing protocols so that records over 10 years old could be destroyed. This lack of access to records has affected so many individuals as they are unable to prove they received blood or blood products or receive funding.

51. I have lost faith in the NHS, despite being well treated. I don't blame individuals but the blood scandal has opened my eyes to the way that the NHS operates especially those at the top. I believe the NHS is not led by itself anymore, but led by politicians. It needs to get back to basics and simply provide the care that is needed. That is why it came into being after all.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 27 - 11 - 2021