



Witness Name: Penelope Chequer

Statement No.: WITN4809001

Exhibits: WITN4809002

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PENELOPE ANN CHEQUER

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4 January 2021.

I, Penelope Chequer (known as Penny), will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My date of birth is GRO-C 1951 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I retired on medical grounds in 2009 (aged 58) due to my liver cancer, which I will detail later. I was formerly a Team Leader of Drug & Alcohol Dependency Service. This was a paid role in the Voluntary Sector, funded by the local council.
2. I have been asked to initially detail my interaction with Skipton Fund in this statement. Additionally I will give some details of my infection with hepatitis C (HCV) and treatment, for context.

Section 2. How Affected

3. In the mid 1970's I had a blood test (I cannot recall where or why) and I was told that I had the antibodies to Hepatitis B (HBV), which was explained meant I had previously had HBV but had cleared it.
4. On the GRO-C 1982, I gave birth to my third child in the Kings College Hospital, in Camberwell, London. There had been complications before the birth of high blood pressure. Therefore I was in the hospital for 4 weeks before the birth (and 2 afterwards).
5. During this period in hospital prior to the birth, I had numerous blood tests and the previous HBV antibodies were mentioned, but nothing else.
6. A doctor examined me on the GRO-C and assessed that my baby was 'breech' and I had to have an immediate Caesarean Section (C. Section) and I was rushed into theatre.
7. The following day (GRO-C) in tests my red blood count was found to be very low. It was decided by the medical staff that I needed a blood transfusion. I recall that in all I received 4 units of blood. It took 27 hours to get my count back up.
8. In total I was in Kings College Hospital for 6 weeks before I was discharged with my baby.
9. The following year (1983) I had a further blood test. I do not now recall where or why this was done. When I was given the results, I was told that I had "hepatitis Non A, Non B". I was not given any explanation of what this meant. I was given no advice as to care or treatment.
10. I recall thinking this meant that I now had the antibodies for both hepatitis A & B. Not that this was a different, more serious infection.

11. Then in about 1993, a friend wasn't feeling well and spoke to me about hepatitis C (HCV) and that it used to be called 'hepatitis Non A, Non B' and I realised that this is what I had had for years. I don't recall any specific illnesses in the intervening period (10 years) that I think were caused by the HCV.
12. I decided to have a blood test. I went to the Genitourinary (GU) clinic at St Georges Hospital. About a week later someone phoned me at home to say that I had hepatitis C, I was not given any information about it. I referred myself to the Liver Unit of Kings College Hospital, which is one of the leading Liver Hospitals. They did further tests and confirmed that I had HCV. They told me much more detail about the infection and how I should care for myself. I am still under their care.
13. Ultrasound tests in 1993 showed that I had fibrosis. Tests later showed this had progressed to cirrhosis.
14. In 1995, I was started on a trial course of Interferon and ursodeoxycholic acid. I was patient number 9. I understand this treatment was being tested at this time. It was intended to be 1 year's treatment. After 3 months, the treatment was stopped because my white blood cells had dropped.
15. In 2006, it was discovered that I have 3 separate oesophageal varices'. In 2007 my alpha feto protein levels were elevated so I had a CT scan which showed a tumour, hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer). The tumour was successfully treated with radio frequency ablation (RFA).
16. In 2009, I had another tumour which successfully treated with 2 Transarterial Chemoembolization (TACE) treatments.
17. In 2010, I was listed for a liver transplant, I was also put on interferon and ribeferon treatment. I discontinued the treatment after 32 weeks because I couldn't tolerate the side effects. I felt suicidal, I was in constant pain,

couldn't sleep, had fungal infections in my mouth and my hair was falling out.

18. In 2011, I was treated with Microwave Ablation (MWA).
19. In 2012, I had more RFA for a tumour in the portal vein, the large vein in the liver.
20. Due to this, I was taken off the Liver Transplant list, as the doctors feared the tumour could spread the cancer to other areas.
21. In 2016, I started a further course of treatment for the HCV, this was Riberferon and Harvoni. The treatment lasted for 6 months and this time it was successful.
22. In 2015, I had TACE for a further tumour.
23. In October 2020, I had TACE for 2 further tumours. Further MRI and CT scans are booked for February 2021.
24. The various dates that I have listed are taken from letters from Kings College Hospital.

Section 3. Other Infections

25. Apart from the HBV mentioned in the 1970's, as far as I am aware, I have never had any further infections other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

26. I do not believe that I have never been treated or tested without my consent

Section 5. Impact

27. I have mentioned various treatments that I have had as a direct result of acquiring HCV. I will list the side-effects as specifically as I am able but many would be the same for each treatment.
28. From 1994, when I had my first treatment with Interferon combined with URSO- the test drugs (which was discontinued after 3 months) until about 1997, I suffered from fatigue all the time, I had pains in my arms and legs, digestive problems, brain 'fog' being unable to concentrate, my hair was falling out and depression.
29. In 2010, when I took the Riberferon and Interferon combination, I was again depressed, I had bouts of anger and I lost about 70% of my hair.
30. During both treatments I had trouble sleeping.
31. Thankfully, the side effects from the Riberferon and Harvoni in 2016, were much milder.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. I feel I have had good treatment from Kings College Hospital. In relation to the HCV treatments, there was no issue getting the first 2 treatments but with the Harvoni, an initial doctor told me I could have the treatment. A second said I could only have Riberferon and another drug for 6 months; as the Harvoni was very expensive (I think they said £60,000).
33. I said I didn't want this because of the side-effects, so the decision was taken back to the medical team and thankfully they said I could have the Harvoni.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. In 2006, I heard about the Skipton Fund from a solicitor whom I contacted with regard to receiving infected blood. My doctor at the Liver Unit of Kings College Hospital, filled out the medical section of the application form and circled the section GRO-C
35. Skipton rejected me because of this. I didn't appeal because I didn't think there was any point but I feel they did not look at the detail of my infection.
36. GRO-C
GRO-C By the time I had my third daughter (detailed above) in 1982 and received the blood transfusion, I had been regularly tested in the hospital and the HCV (or Non A, Non B) was not found. Therefore prior to the transfusion after the C Section I was not HCV infected.
37. I have been told about the English Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS) and I am considering applying to them for financial assistance.
38. I sent the investigator a scan of a letter from Kings College Hospital dated 11 January 2021, which lists my various medical issues. I used this letter for the dates I have provided above. The letter is exhibited as **WITN4809002**

Section 8. Other Issues

39. When I was told I had hepatitis C I felt unclean, I thought I was going to die soon. I found it very hard to have a relationship with anyone because most people believed it was a sexually transmitted disease and I felt no one would want a relationship with someone with a terminal illness.
40. When I was working, when I was first diagnosed I told the manager. I had just trained on auricular acupuncture as an adjunct to my job. He said I

should wear latex gloves whilst doing acupuncture, then shortly afterwards he told me that I shouldn't do acupuncture.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

17th September