Witness Name: Anthony Flanagan
Statement No.: WITN3180001
Exhibits: WITN3180002-WITN3180003
Dated: 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANTHONY FLANAGAN

I, Anthony Flanagan, will say as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Anthony Flanagan. My date of birth is GRO-C and my address is GRO-C I live with my wife and we have two daughters, my youngest daughter still lives with us.

Section 2: How infected

Haemophilia

2. I have mild Haemophilia B which was diagnosed at the age of five. It was discovered when I had to have an operation to have my tonsils taken out.

3. I have always been treated for my haemophilia at the Manchester Royal Infirmary, apart from on one occasion when I was treated at Blackburn Royal Hospital. Due to the passage of time, I cannot recall the names of all of the clinicians that have treated me.

4. The first time that I received Factor IX was in May 1985. I had broken my ankle and my brother-in-law took me to Blackburn Royal Hospital. They put my ankle in plaster but it had to be removed two days later because it had swollen due to internal bleeding. They refused to treat me with blood products because they said the swelling was not due to bleeding and from what I can recall, I then attended the Manchester Royal Infirmary who treated me with Factor IX. I was never given any advice about the risks of the treatment.

Diagnosis with Hepatitis C

5. A few weeks after receiving my first treatment with Factor IX, I became ill. My skin turned yellow, I was hallucinating and I had no energy. I was in bed for weeks and I could not work for three months. It was quite a few months before I fully recovered from this episode.

6. In around 1986, I attended a routine appointment at the Manchester Royal Infirmary and that is when I was told that I contracted Hepatitis C (which was then known as Non-A Non-B Hepatitis). It was a senior Haemophilia Nurse called Olive Reading who informed me. As far as I can recall, there was no specific blood test which could identify the virus at the time but they had reviewed the results of a previous blood test which I had given. I assume that I was diagnosed with Non-A Non-B Hepatitis on the basis of what had been identified as indicators for the disease. I was also given a booster vaccination for Hepatitis A and B. I cannot recall being told about the potential consequences of the infection at this time, I do not think they knew much about it.

7. It was not until 1994 that I was formally diagnosed with what was then identified as Hepatitis C. I refer to a letter which was sent by Dr M Bolton, Clinical Assistant, the Manchester Royal Infirmary to my GP dated 29 November 1994 **[WITN3180002]**. The letter states that a second generation test confirmed that I was Hepatitis C positive and that I was probably a chronic carrier of Hepatitis C. It sets out the risk of transmitting the infection and the increased risk of long term liver disease.

8. I do not recall who confirmed to me that I was Hepatitis C positive in 1994 but I did see Dr Charles Hay. He informed me about the risk of liver disease and Cirrhosis of the liver. He told me about a seminar which had been arranged, I think it was in Pendlebury, which I also attended to find out more about the infection.

9. Subsequently, I was informed that my own immune system had naturally cleared the virus. There is a letter in my medical records dated 12 May 1995 confirming this **[WITN3180003]**. I therefore never received any treatment for Hepatitis C.

Section 3: Other infections

10. As far as I am aware, I have not been infected with or exposed to any other infections.

Section 4: Consent

11. I was never told that I was being tested for Hepatitis C or any other infection prior to 1994 when I tested positive. I just assumed that I was having routine blood tests.

Section 5: Impact

Physical/mental impact on me

12. The only time that Hepatitis C has had any real physical impact on me is when I was ill in May 1985. Over the following decade, I sometimes felt off colour and my liver function tests were at times slightly abnormal but as far as I know, they were never seriously abnormal. I did experience some minor symptoms which I was told might happen and it was not very often.

13. In terms of my mental health, I have always been a very positive person. My Hepatitis C diagnosis did not change that. I have never seen the point in getting anxious and upset about things that you can have little or no impact on.

How infected status has impacted on medical treatment and/or dental care

14. I have always made my dentists aware that I have haemophilia. Once I knew that I had tested positive for Hepatitis C in 1994, I did inform the dentists about it and I also told them that I had cleared the infection relatively shortly thereafter. They have never appeared to be concerned about it and it has not impacted on my dental or any other medical treatment which I have received.

Private and family life

15. When I was ill in 1985, this obviously had an impact on my family. My daughters were only five and seven years' old. My wife had just started a new job so our extended family members had to take on some responsibilities in relation to the children, taking them to and from school etc. I could not do this at the time because I was so ill. We needed this assistance for several weeks until I felt strong enough to help.

Stigma

16. I never really experienced any stigma in relation to my Hepatitis C diagnosis. However, stigma was certainly attached to being a haemophiliac and unfortunately GRO-C. GRO-C GRO-C. This is because GRO-C GRO-C.

17. My daughters were bullied at school due to the association of HIV with haemophiliacs – they were nick named the 'AIDS twins' and they had it pretty tough for a while. In the end, I had to attend the school with a Haemophilia Nurse to try and educate the children. This did seem to work apart from the occasional school bully.

18. Most of my life I have been self-employed as a freelance architect. I have always been quite open about being a haemophiliac with my work colleagues

and when I tested positive for Hepatitis C, I do recall that I told several people about it, I am not sure why I did as I worked in separate areas to them. I have always been of the opinion that if people cannot deal with it, that is their issue. However, I did have to step in when it was impacting on my daughters.

Work, financial impact

19. In 1985, I had only just started my own business and then shortly after, I became ill and I lost three months' income. It could not have come at a worse time. I never claimed for sick pay as it was the derisory sum of around £28.00 per week. My wife was working so we just tried to manage with the income that she was receiving.

20. When I purchased an office building with my business partner which we shared, we had to apply for a mortgage and insurance. As part of that process, I had to undertake a medical examination. When it was established that I had haemophilia and that I had historically been infected with Hepatitis C, it appreciably increased my half of the insurance premiums.

Section 6: Treatment, care, support

21. I have never been offered or received counselling in relation to my Hepatitis C diagnosis.

Section 7: Financial assistance

22. Dr Hay told me about The Skipton Fund and said that I would be entitled to the Stage 1 payment. I applied for it but I was refused because I had cleared the virus naturally and had not received any medical treatment for Hepatitis C, i.e. treatment with Interferon. I can recall being told that someone who worked for The Skipton Fund had been fraudulently applying for ex gratia payments by forging one of the Manchester Royal Infirmary's doctor's signature. Due to this, when I applied, The Skipton Fund were tightening up their processes and criteria. I actually applied twice and was told 'no' for the same reason.

Section 8: Other issues

23. I had a cousin who died in 1995 from AIDS. He contracted HIV after he was injured in a car crash in around 1986 and was treated at the Royal Manchester Infirmary with contaminated blood products. This obviously had a terrible impact on the whole family. I am still in contact with his brother and sister and they are extremely upset and angry about what happened and it still makes me upset because he died solely due to receiving contaminated blood products.

Section 9: Conclusion

24. I hope that the Inquiry can uncover the truth about what happened and provide clarity about what the Government and its ministers knew. From what I have read and understand, the Government knew that the blood products were contaminated before the patients who were receiving it and the public were made aware of it. The blood products should never have been sourced from individuals who put themselves at risk and they should have been screened properly. The Government did not have the right to decide that if a few people suffered or died from the contaminated blood products, that would be for the greater good.

25. I do not wish to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry but I am happy for my evidence to be public.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed: GRO-C ....

Mr Anthony Flanagan

Dated: ....10/05/2021.........................