Witness Name: BRYAN HARRIS
Statement No.: WITN0740001
Exhibits: None
Dated: 22nd July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRYAN HARRIS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 15 February 2019.

I, BRYAN HARRIS, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Bryan Harris. My date of birth is GRO-C 1953 and my address is GRO-C London, GRO-C GRO-C I have enjoyed a varied career in both the UK and USA over the last 30 years and I am currently based in England and in gainful employment.

2. I intend to describe my infection with the virus Hepatitis C (hereinafter referred to as 'HCV') from contaminated blood given to me during a blood transfusion following a crush injury to my right lower leg. I will go on to describe how this affected my family and myself. I will also describe the treatment that I received and the impact it had on our lives.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In my 20s and 30s I was quite a proficient musician and I was involved in music promotions in England. I spent some of my time in the 1980s in the United States where I pursued my interests in art, music and drama. There was a very fervent scene there for a few years.

4. Between 1986-1989 I had relationships with both men and women but I always practised safe sex and went for full screen testing every 2-3 months throughout this period.

5. I was in USA in 1989. I was living in GRO-C Alameda County, in California. I was in a very busy nightclub one evening when somebody fell on me from an upper level in the club and landed directly on my right lower leg. I knew straight away that I had suffered a serious injury. I managed to drive to my partner's flat and my partner called an ambulance. I was admitted to hospital and told that I had suffered a right lower leg crush injury, a spiral fracture in both my fibula and tibia and partial fracture to my ankle.

6. I did not have private medical insurance cover but that is the norm for many in America. I was in intensive care for seven to nine days. The cost of my medical treatment, bedding and nursing cost me in the region of $11,000 and this wiped out all my savings.

7. The hospital gave me the option of amputating my right lower leg from the knee. In order to do this I would have needed to go to a public hospital and declare myself as bankrupt as I had had no money left to pay for further medical treatment. This was not an option that appealed to me.

8. The hospital put a full cast on my right lower leg and sent me home. I went back to the hospital for check ups and it was noted that my leg was shrinking rapidly. The hospital consultants said that I needed to do something quickly. I was completely immobile. I talked to my family and they paid for my flights back to the UK. In November 1989 I flew back to London. My younger sister met me at the airport and took me back to GRO-C, which is our home town.

9. I was admitted to hospital soon after arriving home and within hours of being in hospital I had three major operations to rebuild my right lower leg.

10. I recall that my younger sister lived in the same village as the Consultant Surgeon who operated on me. Word had spread that this particular surgeon was a genius in his field and I felt very lucky. I understood that there was literally no bone left in my right lower leg due to the spiral facture however, the surgeon managed to connect everything up. I needed several blood transfusions in the process. I was never advised of any risk of contamination. I believe that the surgeon left part of one of the bones that wasn't shattered to a point below the knee. Below that all the bone had shattered and gone. I was left with a ghost bone to help with the alignment of the knee and my general balance.

11. I was in serious pain after the operation. I didn't know what was going on for a few weeks. I was in a lot of pain and often screamed out for pain medication. Everything was in a haze. After six weeks I started rehabilitation for two to three months. As soon as I could use a walking cast I was discharged from hospital. Two weeks later I returned to my partner in California. Once the cast had gone I was amazed at how well I could walk without even a limp. My leg seemed fully aligned and I could run, play, swim and dance. My foot now goes out to the right slightly but it is barely noticeable.

12. My then relationship came to an end and I returned to London at the end of 1991. Initially I stayed with my sister in GRO-C for a few years before finding a place of my own and during this time I rebuilt my fitness and had a good job at John Lewis as a warehouse worker. I used to bike five miles to and back from work. I was also looking after my mother and was her carer for the two years.

13. Everything settled down over the subsequent four to five years and I visited California about once a year. I was very physically fit by this time and apart from a few tinges did not notice any symptoms. I moved back to London in 2003 and had a few relationships. After my accident all my relationships were with women. I had a few changes of occupation during this time.

14. Around March 2016 I was suffering from colds a lot and was generally run down. A lot of people noticed that I wasn't looking well at all. I was having difficulties with my hearing. I was feeling run down and it was unusual for me because I was a pretty fit guy. I knew something was wrong so I went to see my GP.

15. My GP did not agree for a referral to investigate the cause of my ear problems so I changed GP surgery to Dr GRO-D based at Victoria Medical Practice on Titmarsh Street, London. I was referred thereafter and it was identified that I had an infection in my ear. I subsequently attended for an operation at Guys Hospital, London to open up my ear canal. I also had blood tests because of ulcers in my bowel which were later treated.

16. I waited four to five days for the test results. I attended with Dr GRO-D in person to receive my results. This was around June or July 2016. Dr GRO-D told me that my test results indicated that I was infected with HCV and that the infection had "manifested itself" some years later. Dr GRO-D then went on to ask me some intrusive questions. I was asked if I had ever injected drugs and I confirmed that I had not.

17. Dr GRO-D spent quite a bit of time listening to my relationship history and sex life. I told Dr GRO-D that I had never been promiscuous and that I had always enjoyed long-term relationships. I explained how it was impounded in me that it was important to practice safe sex. I confirmed that I did have lots of tattoos and they had all been carried out by world renowned, highly regulated and licensed individuals. I confirmed that I had never taken any intravenous drugs.

18. I told my doctor, Dr GRO-D, that I had never practised unprotected anal sex and for the past 20 years all my relationships had been with women. I detailed the chronology of my relationships and my lifestyle between the period 1986-1989. I was also aware that many people who had been infected between 1985-1990 were now coming forward and the infection appeared to be linked to blood transfusions. I felt that I fit into that time bracket. Dr GRO-D noted that I had undergone blood transfusions in 1989 however I do not remember her making any connection between the blood transfusion and my infection with HCV. At this time I did not mention the blood transfusion I had undergone during my leg operations in 1989.

19. Dr GRO-D told me that I needed treatment because my condition would deteriorate. She also told me that she would have a discussion with other medical professionals and let me know when they had reached a decision as to whether I could be offered HCV treatment. She advised me of the side effects of treatment. I was referred to a Consultant at St Thomas Hospital Hepatology Department.

20. Dr GRO-D advised me not to have anal sex and of the risk of sharing toothbrushes and advised against the same. I was advised to inform my dentist of my diagnosis of HCV. I informed Dr GRO-D that I had been wearing full dentures the past 10-15 years.

21. When I reflect back upon this discussion I would say that I do not feel that Dr GRO-D gave me enough information about my infection with HCV or how to manage it. I feel that I should have been given more information as a patient. She essentially told me to be careful and that there was information online if I wanted to know more about it.

22. In all honesty Dr GRO-D might have said more but I can't remember because I was in my own world. I did not undergo any type of physical examination.

23. I never received a letter from anybody informing me of my diagnosis of HCV from my Dr GRO-D or from the hepatologist.

24. I believe there is an inaccurate entry in my medical records, which the hepatologist has since brought to my attention. The hepatologist informed me that Dr GRO-D wrote to her stating that I had engaged in promiscuous behaviour whilst I was in America with both men and women. I wrote to Dr GRO-D in February 2019 and queried where she had received this information because I know I never said that to her. I know that I always practised safe sex and all my past partners are still in full health.

25. I know that I told Dr GRO-D that both my partners and I were regularly tested. I have asked Dr GRO-D to retract this letter. I believe there has been a serious misconstruction of what I said. I have not received a response to my letter. Nobody has come back to me about my blood transfusion. The hepatologist also told me that Dr GRO-D said there was a possible link between the HCV and my operations in 1989 although no mention of this was made to me when we talked about the same.

Section 3. Other Infections

26. I do not believe I contracted any other illnesses or infections as a result of my infection with HCV

Section 4. Consent

27. I do not believe I have been treated or tested without my consent. I was never offered any guinea pig treatment and I know I would never have agreed to this.

Section 5. Impact

28. I was unaware of any physical signs which could have suggested that I had an underlying infection with HCV other than suffering from colds and a feeling of being generally run down. It was also comments from my friends advising me that I didn't look well. This along with my hearing difficulties prompted my visit to Dr GRO-D in March 2016.

29. The mental effect was worse than the physical process. When Dr GRO-D informed me that I was infected with HCV I was in shock. I was flabbergasted. I knew all about HIV but I did not know as much about HCV. I felt that it was a death sentence. I could not believe there was no guarantee regarding HCV treatment. I felt like it was a lottery whether I would be treated. The decision was in the hands of the medical profession to make alone. Dr GRO-D said it would be a simple yes or no. There was no middle ground.

30. I felt like I was in no-mans land. I couldn't believe it. I felt that they should not be able to play with someone's life like that. I didn't know if I was going to live or die. I realised that I could not expect them to give me any advice as that would be giving me false hope. I can't

remember everything the GP said because I was in my own world. I felt like there was no light at the end of the tunnel and I closed down.

31. I felt like the doctors were playing with my life. I might have been an old boy but I had a lot left in me. I felt the way in which I was told was in a very clinical manner with no compassion or empathy. It was cut and dry for my Consultant with the odd smile here and there.

32. The Consultant had moments when he was empathetic and at other times he was quite clinical. In hindsight perhaps I could not tell what was going on as I was in such a state but I felt there were a few blunt moments. All I was hearing was that either you get the treatment or you don't.

33. I wondered if the doctors would look at me and think that my time was up. I thought back to the occasions when my GP had seen me walk in the surgery looking unwell but never commented on this. I felt it was strange for any medical professional to look at you and observe that you are not well and not act upon it, also when my mental health was suffering and noticeable.

34. I informed my then employer about my diagnosis and they were very good about it. I asked for total confidentiality. They were supportive and told me that I could take time for appointments or even take a break if I felt I needed to. I did go to the seaside for a few days to clear my thoughts.

35. My state of mind was in a complete mess but I held it together. I am a very private person. I felt suicidal at one point. I couldn't think clearly. Some people said I should source the treatment from India but I was worried about whether that would be the correct treatment. I didn't feel that I trust the treatment abroad. I felt that I could only trust the NHS. I was all over the place because I didn't know what would happen and what the future held for me.

36. Every little thing hit home to me during this time. One becomes very sensitive when you are in limbo. In the back of my head all the time was the thought that I might die. I couldn't see the wood for the trees. I thought that if the doctors said no to treating me I would be doomed. I could only see one avenue that I was going down.

37. I was keeping my personal feelings private but I made my knowledge of the disease public. There were so many stigmas about the condition that many people told me I should go public. I am normally a private person but I decided to let everyone know as I felt it would be helpful. I felt that there was a real ignorance out there and I wanted to help to reduce the stigma associated with the virus. I was not acting in a vengeful manner but I did feel that the medical profession were playing roulette with peoples' lives. This was a condition that you didn't even know was in your body. People came up to me and said they heard I had Aids. I didn't realise ignorance was that bad.

38. I found out that the proposed HCV medication had not been available for very long. I was waiting for 6 months for doctors to decide if I would be treated with it. It felt like forever.

39. I was finally told that it had been decided that I could receive the HCV treatment in England. When I was told I would get the treatment, it felt like I was getting a new job. All my stress levels fell and all the clouded thoughts left. I was told I would be on a three-month treatment plan. I was referred to St Thomas Hospital for the HCV treatment.

40. My treatment plan required me to take a combination of medication and follow a particular timetable. I was advised about its potential effects. I kept up a regime of eating well and keeping fit. I was very surprised at

how I felt when I started my treatment plan. I felt 'cleaner' in a way quite quickly.

41. During my treatment period I was having blood tests every two weeks. I noticed that there was bleeding coming from my stools. I attended with the hepatologist who analysed my bloods. She informed me that I had developed two ulcers the size of a fifty pence coin in my small bowel which were bleeding. The hepatologist told me that I was anaemic and my white blood count was low and I would need a blood transfusion. I could have suffered a heart attack in this condition.

42. I was admitted as an in-patient straight away. The hepatologist had left for the day so there was some confusion. I was supposed to undergo an endoscopy and to have a blood transfusion. I underwent the endoscopy. I couldn't be sedated and I advised them to just proceed regardless. It was quite uncomfortable. I discovered that the person administering the endoscopy was on his first day on the job. It felt like a comedy of errors. I also underwent a colonoscopy to help them identify the source of the bleed.

43. The timing of the ulcer diagnosis caused me a great deal of anxiety. At this time I was already receiving treatment for HCV. I was kept in a busy ward where there were many people in distress and I found the whole experience very upsetting and often sat outside the ward. I felt that the atmosphere in the ward was similar to a mental hospital.

44. On top of this I also had to keep my employer informed as to what was happening and one of the managers was pressing for me to get back to work. I couldn't confirm when I could return and this was an added pressure. The hospital was telling me that my bloods were not levelling out. I was operated on the sixth day after admission and by day seven my bloods had levelled out.

45. I was extremely worried about taking the HCV medication with all the treatment I was undergoing for my ulcers. I had to prompt the nurses every time to give me my medication. I was worried that they were being willy-nilly with my medication. In addition to this I asked them to make sure that nothing was going to interfere or deplete my HCV medication in any way or form.

46. My main concern was whether the treatment for the ulcer was going to interfere with the HCV medication. The uncertainty was horrible akin to being in the limbo I had been when I did not know if I was even going to be treated for HCV. I didn't want to have to beg to be treated for a course of treatment again.

47. I felt very close to the edge and that I really needed to know. I was seeing a different doctor every day and it was really annoying me. The hospital staff could not confirm to me either way for three days. Finally I was able to speak to a senior doctor who told me he was perfectly sure that I had nothing to worry about and any treatment for the ulcer would not interfere with my HCV treatment.

48. I was moved to the quieter end of the ward. I had no way of communicating with anybody outside the hospital except via my work mobile phone. Nobody knew what was going on with me and I had to call people to inform them what was going on and they posted the information on social media. I ended up staying in hospital for 10 days.

49. Fortunately the HCV treatment worked and I was given the all clear and was able to return to work. I had a memorable meeting with the hepatologist and she told me I was responding well and they could cut the treatment plan short. I was pleased about that. The plan was cut by two to three weeks but my bloods continued to be monitored for up to 6 months. I was given the all clear in January 2017. I felt incredibly lucky

that there was a cure in place for HCV and that the treatment I did not use could be passed to someone else.

50. During the initial period of my HCV treatment I had a complicated relationship with my employer. I changed jobs and moved into a more corporate role. I felt that the change of role would lessen my workload and the increased pay would see me through to retirement. I felt like I was just treated as a number and my diagnosis was not taken any notice of. I felt that I could not stay there either. I didn't like the climate, and the amount of work was too heavy at my age. I was too tired to apply for other jobs. I felt like I had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.

51. The experience of my treatment in conjunction with my working life was difficult. I felt that my life was like a 'movie playing itself over and over'. I felt like people at work were always troubling me.

52. It was getting worse day after day. I had always cared about my work performance and my reputation. This changed. I stopped caring. I was always in the same mode and literally drowned in my own thoughts.

53. I was very stressed mentally and it was escalating. I was applying for other jobs. I was looking for jobs that offered housing and twice I was unable to take up opportunities because the timing did not work. At one point I was living with the threat of homelessness as my employer wanted to sell my accommodation and make me redundant also.

54. My younger sister who I had been close to passed away GRO-C ten years before I found about my diagnosis with HCV, therefore, she never learned of my infection. I also had an older sister GRO-C GRO-C. GRO-D

GRO-D

GRO-D

55. At the time I received news of my diagnosis I had been in a relationship with a lady for about three to four months. My girlfriend knew something was wrong but I didn't feel able to tell her. I didn't know how to tell her. She was with me up to the point I was admitted to hospital to treat the ulcers. I did tell her that we needed to practice safe sex about a month into the relationship. GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C our relationship came to a natural end four to five months thereafter.

56. I have a close relationship with my niece who is my younger sister's daughter. She admired me for telling her about my diagnosis and was extremely supportive. She has a very calm nature. I felt like she was the calm amongst the storm as her own work involves helping people struggling to live. She was able to relate to what was happening and able to advise me about how to handle my emotions. She told me not to think too much about the HCV and her advice helped me a lot.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

57. I have addressed the mental difficulties I faced leading up to the confirmation that I would be offered HCV treatment. I can confirm that I was never offered any counselling even though my mental state was quite obvious to all health professionals.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

58. I learned that there were financial schemes about six months ago when a friend mentioned a news item about a fund for compensation for persons who had contracted HCV. No medical professional or doctor ever mentioned these financial schemes to me. Thereafter I read that the Skipton Fund was being disbanded. I didn't know who to write to so I wrote to the NHS. I also thought that as I had been cured of the condition that I would not be entitled to compensation.

59. I contacted the Hepatitis C charity. They are assisting me. I have had quite a good response from the charity. I have made a formal request to Northampton General Hospital to obtain my medical records and they have confirmed to me that they have found all my records on microfilm and will be sending them out to me. I am also going to meet with the hepatologist and Consultant to complete the forms I need to apply for compensation. I understand that I need to give an overview of my treatment and condition before, during and after my diagnosis and treatment.

60. I have requested my medical records in connection to the operations I underwent in 1989. I am waiting for a reply from my GP and if necessary I will ask her to respond in writing. It is very early days at the moment. I have applied for my medical records and I do not know what they will reveal.

Section 8. Other Issues

61. I am hopeful that many people will come forward and share their stories in respect to this Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 22nd of July 2019