

Witness Name: Darren Smith

Statement No: WITN1525001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: October 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DARREN SMITH

I, Darren Smith, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My full name is Darren Edward Smith. I was born on **GRO-C** 1975, and I live at **GRO-C**.
2. My youngest brother, Colin Smith (born **GRO-C** 1982), was co-infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products. He died on 13th January 1990, aged 7.
3. This Witness Statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my brother's medical records.
4. My mother has provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry (Witness Number WITN1523001-4). This Statement should be read in conjunction with her Statement.

Section 2. How Affected

5. Colin had severe Haemophilia A. He was treated at the Heath Hospital in Cardiff (now the University of Wales Hospital) under the care of Dr Bloom.
6. My parents were told that Colin was infected with HIV when he was about 2 years old. They didn't know that Colin was also infected with HCV until some time after his death.
7. My parents were not given sufficient information or advice to help them to understand and/or manage the HIV infection. They were not forewarned of any risk of infection associated with Colin's treatment. They were told that Colin was infected with HIV in a hospital corridor, and they weren't given any information about the severity of the infection other than 'this year would be vital'.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. I am not aware of any other infections that Colin was exposed to.

Section 4. Consent

9. I am the eldest of four boys. As children, our parents tried to hide and shield us from a lot of the fall out of what was happening. Our parents were very much kept in the dark back then and they have lately learned more through obtaining Colin's medical notes and records and through the Inquiry. We have sporadically discussed things as a family and we most certainly believe Colin to have been treated and tested for the purposes of research. We are shocked that Colin was used as nothing more than a pet subject. When the damage was done, the way that it was handled in blindsiding two parents and telling them in a hospital corridor that their youngest son was infected with HIV is completely unacceptable. It is really painful and upsetting to think about the whole thing. I do not like to reflect on that period of my life. It is too painful to do so.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

10. I do not have a memory or awareness of the reasons Colin became ill until I was at least 10 years old. It must have then become more difficult for our parents to hide and shield us from what was going on. Up until then, I thought their concern about Colin to be purely haemophilia related. I don't remember any specific conversation. I learned through osmosis. HIV/AIDS was all over the media and there was no ignoring it. It wasn't difficult to come to the realisation that it involved Colin.
11. Our family got involved with the Birchgrove support group and they put us in touch with another family with a haemophiliac son [GRO-C] similarly infected with HIV. [GRO-C] and I were the same age. We became firm friends. We went to secondary school together. It was then that I became fully aware of the significance of the infection. It was a very painful period of my life. Teenage years come with their own complications, but it was a very complicated and conflicting time for me.
12. I had profound feelings of shame, guilt and fear throughout my early teens. HIV/AIDS was very much associated with homosexuality and the use of it as a culture in the playground environment was very unpleasant. [GRO-C] and I were fast friends. I was in fear of people finding out that [GRO-C] was infected and being bullied, which became a reality (for both of us) when [GRO-C]'s situation became public. Then there was Colin's situation. I was terrified that they would find out about Colin at school too. My parents wanted him to go to a normal mainstream school and the press ran the story about their struggles (although I am uncertain as to whether Colin was named in the story). [GRO-C] and my brother had a terrible time of it.
13. I flourished at my first year of secondary school. I was assessed and placed in the top set in nearly every subject. All that diminished with the realisation of the life-threatening implications of Colin's infection and more so when Colin became unwell at home. He was in hospital for what felt like a whole year prior to his death. Our parents never left Colin's side. They took shifts. We

didn't see much of them and certainly not together. We spent a lot of time on our own. I was the oldest. I didn't want to complain to my parents about the responsibility, the bullying and my fears for Colin. They were suffering enough. It was a very lonely place to be. There was no support structure at school. No teachers spoke to me about what was going on at home. They never spoke to me about Colin even after his death.

14. Colin was discharged from hospital to come home and spend his last Christmas with us in 1989. No-one spoke of it, but I was a young teenager (14 years old) and I could clearly see he wasn't going to last. He looked obviously ill, with a drip up his nose and he was barely with us. The last couple of weeks of Colin's life are burned in my memory. Our parents knew that Colin only had a day or two left as (without explaining themselves) they suggested to us that we go to stay with friends for the weekend. I returned home to find Colin's bedding piled up in our hallway as there were people (family members) in the living room where Colin had previously been sleeping. I knew what had happened before my mother even took me upstairs to tell me Colin had died. It was brutal. Everything was a blur after that.
15. The grief and the complicated set of emotions to include guilt and shame have stayed with me into my late teens and adulthood. The huge reluctance I had to tell anyone just stayed with me. My wife is one of the very few I have ever told. She and her family have been fantastic. People are less ignorant and less concerned now. People are more open to talk about it as there isn't the same bias and fear, but I find it too hard to dwell on it. I was always more serious than others of my age. I grew up quickly. I have become more cynical, borne out of my experience as a child. The slightest injustice makes me really angry and whilst I try to be laid back, I can go off on a rant quickly. [GRO-C] too passed away through complications of his infection whilst in his early thirties. The decision makers should be held to account. The politicians of the day should not be allowed to get away with it. It is an absolute disgrace that those left with us are not getting the support they deserve.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

16. I refer to my mother's Statement.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

17. I refer to my mother's Statement.

Anonymity

18. I do not wish to apply for anonymity, and I understand that this Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.. GRO-C

Dated 2 November 22