

Witness Name: Lynda Holmes

Statement No.: WITN2164001

Exhibits: WITN2164002-004

Dated: 27th May 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LYNDA HOLMES

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 16th May 2022.

I, Lynda Holmes, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Lynda Holmes. My date of birth is GRO-C 1959, and my address is known to the Inquiry. I work in Strathclyde University as a Trade Union Organiser for Academics, and I have been in this role for the last twenty years. I am the eldest daughter in my family, I have a brother, John, who is five years younger than me and a sister, Christine, who is nine years younger. I have a son, Calvin, who is twenty years old. I intend to speak about my father, John Holmes, who was born on the GRO-C 1935 and passed away on 29th May 1998 from pneumonia, immunosuppression and complications of a liver transplant. I exhibit my father's Death Certificate under **WITN2164002**. I will speak in particular about the nature of his illness,

how the illness affected him, the treatment he received and the impact it had on his and our lives together as a family.

2. I do not wish to remain anonymous for this statement.

Section 2: How Affected

3. My dad was sure and steadfast. My dad was a big stickler for the rules and obeying the rules, he really was. It was quite funny, well not funny but lovely, at his funeral the minister said, "John was an engineer, and he had a blueprint for his life". He was an engineer for most of his life and that description really was my dad to a tee, you couldn't shift him if his mind was set on something. He was very quiet; he wouldn't say two words where one word would cover it. Looking back, I think he was quite shy really. My dad married my mum, Christine, on GRO-C 1958 and they were married for nearly 40 years before he passed.
4. My dad began working as an engineer almost as soon as he had passed his exams. He worked in a car factory, the factory was initially called the Rootes car plant, then it became the Pressed Steel, then it became the Talbot Plant and then finally the Peugeot Plant. My dad was there through all those changes. My dad was one of the last people to work on the plant before it became the Phoenix Retail Park, after all 9000 staff had been made redundant, he was the last man standing. Even though all the factory buildings have been cleared now, my dad's old office is still standing today. Eventually my dad was made redundant as well, once all the factory plant and machinery had been sold. He was offered quite a substantial role at a similar plant in South Korea around that time, but he didn't go because he didn't want to leave us, his family. After that my dad got a job at Hunterston Power Station, and that was the last role he had before he got ill. I remember his boss at the power station was wonderful, he loved my dad. He said my dad always got on with the job, didn't chit chat and that was what he liked. When my dad took ill and had to stop working, he kept his job open for

months and months and it wasn't really until my dad told him he wouldn't be well enough to return that he stopped holding it for him.

5. I had a good relationship with my dad. My dad and I were quite similar people, not in the quiet and shy way, but what we believed in, and thought was important in life. I looked up to my dad, he knew everything.
6. After my dad died, my mum started to suffer from dementia and would often get quite confused with everything. So, some of the details of exactly what happened on the day my dad received his transfusion have gotten a bit confused.
7. Sometime in July of 1990, my dad's stomach had started to progressively swell over a few weeks to a month and cause him some discomfort. None of us knew what the issue was but my dad still felt he could go to work, so we sort of put it out of our minds. On the 2nd of August 1990, around a month after this stomach issue began, he came back from work around 6 o'clock complaining about his stomach. He went straight up the stairs to the bathroom and the next minute blood exploded out of his mouth. There was blood everywhere. Whatever this was in his stomach, it must have been full of blood, the blood was everywhere; all over the bathroom walls and the floor. He was then taken by ambulance from the house to the Royal Alexandra in Paisley. At that stage, I think they said to my mum that he would need an emergency blood transfusion and my mum agreed or my dad agreed, I am not one hundred percent certain who consented to the transfusion, but I know that he received it around 10 PM that evening. I cannot say for certain how many units of blood he received, but I know it was this transfusion that led to his infection with hepatitis C.
8. I don't know whether my dad or my mum were made aware of the risk of infection from receiving a blood transfusion that day. They could have been asked to sign a waiver or something, but that is pure conjecture. As far as I know they weren't aware of any risks. But what I am aware of, is when it was discovered later that this transfusion had led to my dad's health issues, that

angered me to my core and still does. My decent, hard-working, never missed a day in his life, never drank alcohol or smoked, father was given infected blood that led to everything that happened after that day.

9. After he received the transfusion, he was released home after a few days. This then began almost two years of him going in and out of hospital whilst they tried to diagnose the health issues he developed after the transfusion. At the worst points, his liver would fail, and he would turn yellow with jaundice. Then he'd go to the hospital and recover and then he'd be released only to fall ill again. It felt like he was continually relapsing all that time once he had that blood transfusion. Nobody at the Royal Alexandra Hospital seemed to know what was wrong with him. I would say that the health issues my dad started to suffer from began shortly after the transfusion. What I do remember is that in the 18 months between my dad getting the transfusion and eventually getting a liver transplant in 1992, he was ill, ill, ill. He would regularly suffer from jaundice and then go back to normal.
10. A couple of times I got a real fright because he would get very confused and see things that weren't there. There was an occasion where he was sitting at home across from me kissing his lips across the room, when I asked him what he was doing, he said he was talking to the cat, but it was actually just his slippers. So, I knew his eyesight was starting to deteriorate during those 18 months as well. Sometimes he would ask me, "how many Daniel O'Donnell's can you see on the telly?" I'd say I could only see one, but he would say he could see six. The Royal Alexandra didn't seem to know what was wrong with him over those 18 months. At first, they said it was likely a stomach ulcer, which didn't seem realistic to me, I'd never seen anyone with an ulcer suffer from issues like that. It wasn't until they diagnosed him with complete liver failure at the end of those 18 months that we got any answers. I remember a doctor in the Royal Alexandra came and spoke to my mum and told her that my dad was suffering from complete liver failure after having received infected blood, and he would require a liver transplant. They said that when the liver fails, whatever is causing it to fail, if that stops i.e., you're a drinker and you stop drinking, it should regenerate. But obviously

that didn't apply to my dad, he wasn't a drinker and there wasn't anything he could stop doing to help his liver because he wasn't doing anything, it wasn't him causing the liver failure. So, over these 18 months, his liver had failed and regenerated that many times that basically my dad's liver was only scar tissue. So, the liver was useless and had to be replaced and they spoke to my mum and my dad and interviewed me before they decided whether he was suitable for a transplant, and eventually they decided he was. The hepatitis C diagnosis came before the diagnosis of complete liver failure, while he was still being treated at the Royal Alexandra. My dad was diagnosed with hepatitis C on 1st February 1992. He received his diagnosis from a Dr Hyslop, one of the Consultants at the Royal Alexandra.

11. I am not sure what information my dad was provided with about his infection when he was given his diagnosis. All I know is that my mum was delighted, absolutely delighted that my dad had hepatitis C because at least it was diagnosis. At least we could finally put a name to what had been happening. I don't think she quite realised what the condition was, she would run up to everyone saying "He's got hepatitis C! He's got hepatitis C!", she was just thrilled there was finally a diagnosis. They eventually said to my mum and my dad that he had been infected with hepatitis C from his transfusion, but they hadn't known the blood was infected. I remember being told that Dr Hyslop had said at the diagnosis, "we have not seen that here before", referring to an infection from a blood transfusion. I'm not sure what they told him about the infection, but I remember I found out shortly after the diagnosis, I don't remember who told me, but I found out.
12. I don't know how sufficient the information was. When my dad received his diagnosis, he was very ill, so I don't know if he was in a position to understand or manage the infection with any information. We were just focused on him not dying.
13. I definitely think my dad should have received his diagnosis sooner. He went through 18 months or sheer and utter hell when they were trying to diagnose him, I don't know how they didn't find the infection. He was at death's door on

multiple occasions with his liver problems over that period. He was falling ill, getting jaundiced, recovering, collapsing the next day. It was a horrible cycle. That period before his diagnosis, where we didn't know what it was, was so hard for us, and it went on for a long time.

14. I couldn't really say much about how my dad's infection diagnosis was given to him or how he felt about. My dad didn't say very much and that wasn't something he spoke to me about.
15. I don't remember my mum or dad or myself receiving any information about the risk of cross-infection; not one single word about that at all. And looking back, that really bothers me because back then, I was caring for my dad a lot. We didn't know that me or my mum could be infected with this, we just thought it was inside my dad.

Section 3: Other Infections

16. I am not aware of my dad having contracted any other infections other than hepatitis C.

Section 4: Consent

17. I do not believe my dad was ever treated or tested without his knowledge or consent. Though I cannot be sure he actually consented to the transfusion himself, or whether my mum did on his behalf. For his diagnosis, I don't know if he was ever told that he was being tested for hepatitis C beforehand. I just think they were testing him everything they could think of.
18. I can't say for sure whether my dad was ever treated or tested without being given full or adequate information, but I know if he knew the blood was infected he would have said, no thanks.

19. I do not believe my dad was ever treated or tested for the purposes of research. Though there might have been some in relation to his liver transplant, as he was on the first in Scotland to receive one, but I can't be sure.

Section 5: Impact

20. Those 18 months where my dad was infected was the most ill I've ever seen anybody who was still alive. I mean it was heart-breaking, especially because he would sometimes recover a little bit and you thought he might be getting better but then he'd just deteriorate again. It just constant terror of death for us at that time. During that time, he suffered from jaundice where his eyes and skin turned yellow, problems with his eyesight, fatigue, he would vomit quite a lot, he would feel lethargic. I know my dad was suffering from depression during that time as well. It impacted his life so much, he couldn't drive, he couldn't walk anywhere that was too far away, he was too ill to go to work. All he could really do was sit or lie down, whether that was at home or in the hospital, it was terrible. He was never someone that liked sitting down.
21. In February 1992, my dad went into liver failure, and then his care was taken over by the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. That's where he went for the assessment for a liver transplant, he passed the assessment on the grounds that he had a relatively young family and didn't drink alcohol or anything, i.e. the liver damage wasn't self-inflicted. Then he had the liver transplant operation sometime that month. The operation took 18 hours and then I think he was in intensive care for around three months before he was released home. He has been so ill before the transplant, if your liver fails, it regenerates but it leaves a scar. And dad's liver had failed and regenerated so many times that his liver was basically only scar tissue before the operation. I remember my mum had moved through to Edinburgh and lived in rented nurses' quarters during his operation and recovery. I remember

after his assessment; he was put on a transplant list, and we just had to wait for the call sort of thing. That was a scary time waiting for the call.

22. During his time in intensive care, I know he had to do a lot of physical therapy to build his muscles back up. But he did it, he worked so hard. After a few months we got to the stage where my dad could walk about and do things again and he was happy. But I remember during that recovery, he developed a bit of a temper that hadn't been there before. Looking back, I think a lot of that was frustration. He didn't go back to work after his transplant, and I think not working played into that a bit.
23. It was confirmed after he had the transplant that my dad no longer had hepatitis C. I don't know how exactly he cleared the infection, but the team from the Royal Edinburgh Infirmary visited my dad at home after the transplant. The team told him that the transplant would give around another 7 years of life, and they asked did he consider the transplant to be worth it. My dad said he did; he died short just short of those seven years. Sometime around then, my dad must have been tested again because he was told that he no longer had hepatitis C. It is possible my dad received treatment for hepatitis C around the time of his transplant, but I cannot be sure.
24. I do not believe my dad faced in obstacles or difficulties in getting his transplant, other than going through the normal tests and assessments.
25. I do not think my dad's infection impacted his treatment for anything else, medical or dental. But you have to remember we didn't know about the hepatitis C infection until right until the end of those 18 months, and after that everything moved pretty quickly.
26. The whole process of the infection and the transplant and the recovery was like he had climbed a mountain, and he did manage to get to the top and plant the flag. However, that whole process took its toll on him.

27. Seeing my dad go through all that was absolutely dreadful. I worked for the Scottish Office at the time, and my work were absolutely fantastic with me. To the extent that when my dad was in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, they made some changes for me so that I could do work in Edinburgh. Without that support from my work, I think I would've been right off my head. The people that I worked with made it really easy for me.
28. I can only remember one occasion where we experienced the stigma of a hepatitis C infection, but I'll never forget it. My **GRO-D** was at home on holiday for the first time it maybe thirty years. This was around the time that my dad got his diagnosis. So, my **GRO-D** my cousin and myself had all gone to a tearoom in **GRO-C** for a nice cup of tea. As we were sitting having our tea, my **GRO-D** says, "Hepatitis C? It's only drug addicts and homosexuals that have that." I was so angry when he said that I remember I leaned forward and put my hands on the table and said to him, "I can assure you that my father was none of those things". My cousin agreed and said, "No, he certainly was not". I remember later on during that holiday my **GRO-D** said the same thing to my mum. Having the audacity to try and plant in my mum's head that my dad was secretly a homosexual or a drug addict. When my mum came home after he had said that to her, I have never seen anyone cry as much as my mum did that day. She was sobbing and weeping, and my mum wasn't like that, she was someone who rarely shed a tear most of the time. But this really got to her. Her **GRO-D** had said that to us both and I totally shut him down and haven't spoken to him since. I don't really know how that comment affected my mum in the time that followed but it must have had an impact.
29. During my dad's infection, during those 18 months, he wasn't able to work. His boss kept his job open for him for a lot of that time, from when he was first admitted to hospital. I can't be certain if my dad ever went back to work fully during those 18 months, but I think he may have back for around a week or so during one of his better periods in the early part of that 18 months. I don't think my dad was able to keep up with the job when he went back, so he had to leave again, but they still kept his job open for him. I think

after around six months, my dad, his boss and my mum had a conversation about the situation, and they all agreed that he was unlikely to be able to come back. So, after that, my dad gave up his employment officially. Obviously, my dad giving up his employment had a big financial impact on us all. I remember that was the first time I had to start helping out my mum and dad financially. All I can say is that it wasn't a very good time for us, not good at all.

30. At the time all of my dad's health issues were going on, my siblings were both only in their early 20s, so I don't know how aware they really were of absolutely everything that was going on. I definitely stepped up and took on the big sister role for them to deal with it all and I would relay the important things back to them. Essentially my mum was the main person dealing with everything and I was her number one. Obviously, my siblings were very upset about the situation, seeing their dad get so ill and the effect that was having on our parents. Right from the word go, we all knew that it was a serious thing that was happening. I just remember, every time dad was taken into the hospital or had to be readmitted, we thought he was going to die. We might not have spoken about how we felt at the time, but I was a wreck. So, I can only imagine how they were doing. Mum was very worried during that time that was my dad was going to die. She wasn't interested in anything other than my dad's health and I'm sure that took its toll on her as well.

Section 6: Treatment, Care and Support

31. I do not believe my dad faced any obstacles or difficulties in obtaining treatment care or support as a result of his infection. Though there was only a very short time between him becoming aware of his infection and it being resolved after the transplant.
32. My dad was not offered any kind of counselling psychological support as result of his infection. Neither my mum nor anyone else in the family has been offered that kind of support either. My mum was lucky in that she had friends in the Scottish Infected Blood Forum that were able to support her

through everything. She went to every single one of their meetings; she would participate in them as much as she could. I don't think my dad would have wanted to do any kind of counselling, that was not his sort of thing. My mum could have possibly got some good out of counselling it had been offered. For me, I don't think it's something I would have wanted. I had all this going on with my dad, I was working full-time, and I was going through a divorce, I really didn't have the time.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

33. No one in the family has ever received any financial assistance from anyone, not one single penny.
34. I remember that my mum put in a claim to the Skipton fund around 10 years ago that was rejected. The rejection said that you could appeal, so I put in an appeal. I exhibit a copy of my appeal letter under **WITN2164003**. For that appeal I had put together a whole dossier from start to finish that outlined everything that had happened with my dad. Unfortunately, I no longer have copies of letters from the Skipton Fund rejecting out initial application or the appeal.
35. The Skipton fund said in their rejection to my appeal that because my mum had used the word "oesophagus" when describing what led to the transfusion in the application, the application had been rejected because they believed my dad must have had the infection before this transfusion based on their understanding of the circumstances. Now the word "oesophagus" was not something that was in any of my dad's medical records, it was a phrase that one of the nurses that had been talking to my mum on the day had used. But my mum had got this word stuck in her head and I remember her going out and buying a lot of books to try and understand the phrase. The Skipton Fund concluded then that because the issue was a previous issue with his oesophagus, he must have had the infection before the transfusion, and they said that was the end of the matter

and we couldn't appeal any further. Their letter contradicted itself and it made no sense. I sent them a full chronological dossier of what happened to my dad to show them the truth of the matter, but I don't think they even looked at it. I had even included a letter from my dad's GP Dr K. Lowe where he confirmed that my dad had hepatitis C as a result of an infected blood transfusion, but that didn't persuade them either. I exhibit this letter from Dr Lowe under **WITN2164004**. I feel like our interactions with the Skipton Fund were a complete waste of time from start to finish.

36. Neither my mum nor I were ever aware of SIBSS before this interview. My mum was determined to get justice for my dad, justice that she could prove that my dad contracted hepatitis C from an infected blood transfusion. She spent her a good part of her life trying to prove that, trying to get justice for my dad. She never got it in the end. I remember telling her once that no amount of compensation, no amount of money would undo what he went through, what we all went through. She said she just wanted to get justice for him, she didn't want the money and she would have given all to her children. I don't know if I have the strength to go through another application with SIBSS. The thought of being rejected again fills me with dread.

Section 8: Other Issues

37. The only issue I would like to bring to the Inquiry's attention is the difficulty I had in trying to retrieve my dad's medical records as part of my mum's application to the Skipton Fund. I remember the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary said that they didn't have any copies of my dad's records. I couldn't believe that they couldn't have any record of one of the first successful liver transplants in Scotland. They told me that his records had been stored on microfiche film but had been water damaged and they didn't have any other copies. The Royal Alexandra didn't have any records either. I find both of those things quite suspicious.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Signed Lynda Holmes (Sep 27, 2022 10:01 GMT+1)

Dated **Sep 27, 2022**