



Witness Name: Silvia Austin
Statement No: WITN6326001
Exhibits: **WITN7258002**
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SILVIA AUSTIN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 27 September 2022.

I, Silvia Austin will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. My full name is Silvia Austin and my date of birth is GRO-C 1956. My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I have never been married but I was in a long term relationship for 43 years but I'm now single. I have one daughter aged 35
3. I wish to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV) as a result of a transfusion during an exploratory operation, a cone biopsy to take cells whilst checking for cervical cancer in November 1987. I bled profusely requiring a blood transfusion post operation.
4. I confirm that I am not currently legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry Team to assist me with my statement.
5. I also confirm that I have had the option to seek anonymity and the Inquiry's statement of approach explained to me. I can confirm that I am not requesting anonymity.

6. My operation happened in November 1987. In June 1991 I was attacked in my house, in front of my daughter by someone I knew, who had been drinking heavily. I suffered a serious head injury, this has resulted in me having memory and cognitive issues. Therefore the details in this statement are as accurate as I can make them.
7. I have managed to get some medical notes from my GP which has assisted me to establish some details.

Section 2: How Infected

8. I was admitted to Dulwich Hospital in London for my cone biopsy. I had been having symptoms which lead the doctors to be concerned that I had cervical cancer. The biopsy showed that I had pre-cancerous cells.
9. This was in November 1987, I do not recall the exact date but I know I was on the ward the day the Kings Cross fire happened, which I understand to be on 18 November 1988, so the operation would be just before then.
10. Unfortunately during the operation, which was done under general anaesthetic, I was ruptured and required a blood transfusion, I do not know how many units of blood I received.
11. From the GP notes I was able to obtain, I have sent the Investigator a photograph of a hospital letter from Gerry Hackett Gynaecology Registrar (this would at Dulwich Hospital) to my then GP Dr Wong. It details my cone biopsy resulting 'in a complete excision of a CIN III lesion. Post operatively she had a secondary haemorrhage and subsequently a blood transfusion'.
12. The date of this letter isn't clear in the photo, but in the original (which I have) it is dated 16 March 1988 and refers to a consultation on 10.3.1988. It is produced as exhibit **WITN7258002**.
13. Then in the early 1990's, I had to have a blood test at St Oswulf St Clinic, in London. I was then told that I had contracted Hepatitis C (HCV).
14. At this time, I was not offered treatment by St Oswulf's but I was referred by my GP to the Mary Seacole Clinic. I wasn't given treatment at this time.

15. Around 1999 to 2000 when I moved back to GRO-C I started to go the Kings College Hospital, Liver Unit. I was offered Interferon and Riberviron but I had heard so many bad stories of the side effects of these drugs that I refused them.
16. From the 2000's onwards I was under Kings College Hospital where I would go to the outpatient's clinic for tests I had a liver biopsy which was very painful and laid me up for a week.
17. When it became apparent that I did not have one of the worst strains of HCV. I was offered the chance to go on the clinical trials list so I could be in the front line for treatment when the new drugs became available. I was invited for treatment in 2016 but I had to defer treatment at this time as I had to have a breast cancer op that year. I finally had my HCV treatment with a new drug (I don't recall the name) in 2017, which has been successful.
18. It was only when I became a patient at Kings I felt I was been cared for prior to this I felt alone and scared about my condition.
19. I don't recall what advice I was given to manage the HCV but I do feel I was well looked after, alongside the other problems I have had over the years.
20. The only thing I do recall, is that I was not sure how long I had to live and whether I could infect my young daughter, who was about 7 years old. The lack of accurate information left me very depressed and nervous.
21. The only side effects I recall of having the HCV are mental issues i.e. depression and joint pain but these issues could also have been down to the assault that I suffered. I have also suffered with problems with my liver, it is currently described as 'swollen and stiff' but has not turned to cirrhosis.

Section 3: Other Infections

22. In 1973, when I was 17, I had jaundice and I my mum took me to the GP and I was referred to Liver Unit, Westminster Hospital, and found to be Hepatitis B (HBV) positive. I was not HCV+ at that time. I never had any treatment for the HBV and I think I must have cleared it because it was never mentioned again.
23. I didn't have any other infections as a result of the transfusion in 1987.

Section 4: Consent

24. I don't know that I have been tested without my knowledge or consent or used for research purposes.
25. I believe I was provided with adequate information about my infection or how to deal with it.

Section 5: Impact

26. As mentioned I have had a number of serious medical issues, so it is difficult to separate these as to being specifically about the HCV.
27. I do not have tattoos or any piercings. The transfusion in 1987 is only one I have ever had.
28. When I was young I had to leave my family home and moved into a hostel aged about 16. Unfortunately I feel in with the wrong company and GRO-C
until I sorted myself out by the time I was about 22 GRO-C
GRO-C

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

29. No counselling or psychological support was made available to me.

Section 7: Financial Support

30. I was never told about any financial support but the Investigator has advised about potential support and compensation. I am going to contact the Hepatitis C Trust and the English Infected Blood Support Scheme.

Section 8: Other Issues

31. I have no other matters that I would like to raise.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

17.11.2022